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BENEATH RAFTER AND THATCH

WINFIELD LIONEL SCOTT

Author of "Azure and Silver," "Lazy Days in Venice," "A Singer in the Dusk," "An Alsatian Idyl," Etc.

1922

Chapple Publishing Company, Ltd.

Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

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Mother

As oft I laid in twilight grey,
My tired head upon thy knee;
Thus would I gladly come each day
And tell my sorrows all to thee.

To feel thy touch upon my hair,
That long hath worn the silver hue;
Yet still the old-time need is there
For thy dear love—deathless, true.

Mother! Mother! canst thou know
The long, long hours of toil and care
Till day by day I need thee so?
I miss thy presence everywhere.

Come once again just as of old,
Bringing the softly shaded light;
The counterpane about me fold
Then kiss thy boy, good night, good night!

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FOREWORD

AMID his devotions to the glories of Nature in New Hampshire hills and mountains, I first met Winfield Lionel Scott. From the first glance it was evident that I was face to face with one who possessed the soul of a poet.

In his description of the blend of tone and color as he waved his hand lovingly toward the vista, it seemed as if every tree was his friend, even the granite hills old acquaintances, and yet he was only here as a visitor. He was only here to visit a friend, but Nature, in its universal and all-pervading majesty and beauty, lures the souls of poets.

Winfield Lionel Scott was born a poet. From earliest childhood he was an artist to his finger tips. He is not only a painter who carries the deep, full breath of the woods and the glory of the skies and Nature in her varied moods, but he is a painter of words, and is one of the few artists who is thus able to express himself.

He has traveled in many lands and never tires in his love and devotion to Nature.

His home has ever been a Salon, where guests with artistic leanings and inclinations spent many happy hours.

While he is an artist of wide reputation and a versatile writer who has volumes of gracefully-woven verses and essays breathing the spirit of hope and optimism, he has touched a note in his latest book, "Beneath Rafter and Thatch," that almost seems to suggest the little thatched cot in Ayrshire, where Bobbie Burns was born.

He was long ago appraised as poet-laureate of Michigan, his native state, a fitting and well-deserved recognition of the achievements of his active and busy life of three score and ten.

In "Beneath Rafter and Thatch" he has seemed to read Nature's subtle mysteries in a most inimitable way, with a depth of fervor that is little short of sublime in its concept.

His poems will live because they appeal to the things that broaden our outlook on life. There is no frivolous

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froth in his thoughts and his sources of inspiration ever ring true.

If there ever was a man who has loved art for art's sake in its full and unmeasured sense, it is Winfield Lionel Scott.

Listen to him as he sings:

> "I am too deep in joy's excess for prosy toil;
> For all the world seems filled with breath of roses
> newly born"

During his life he has garnered many priceless mementos far afield. He has been five times overseas, and the splendor of his home is the humble sweetness and associations that it suggests. For here and there are the colorful creations of his master brush. Here an inkwell from Paris, Mohammedan rosaries from Bethlehem, a bottle of sand from the base of the Sphinx, a bit of bread baked in Nazareth, pottery from China and Japan, chips of paving stones from Pompeii, bracelets of India, and rose marble from Nero's golden palace, water from the Nile, the Sea of Galilee, the Red Sea, the Jordan, and St. Mark's. An old oil lamp that brightly burned and gave light in Scotland four hundred years ago, wood from Westminster Abbey, coffee pots from Florence, Venice, and Damascus, and a leopard's skin from South Africa. Amidst this treasure trove of relics and associations, is it any wonder that he touches the lyre with the sure touch of experience, throbbing with the realities of life.

He has been president of the Michigan Authors' Association. His books include "An Alsatian Idyl," "Song of An Idle Hour," "A Singer in the Dusk," "Lazy Days in Venice," and "The Man of Sorrows." The sweet and mellowed tones and the melodious strain of a useful and sweet life are reflected in the lines of "Beneath Rafter and Thatch."

He was born in northern New York, and his educational training was included in the curriculum of the little old log schoolhouse. Although an earl by right of descent from a great-great-grandfather who was chief justice of Ireland,

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he declines to be considered anything in a biographical way, except an American citizen. His mother was of French descent.

He has utilized the stray moments in various ways, in his devotion to the glory of toil and his art. With chipped pieces of glass he made a combination of double windows that sparkle like gems, which is only one proof of the truth of his saying that there is nothing in this world entirely worthless. These gems that glitter and charm are but the waste of the city and indicate how human lives may be transformed from seeming pettiness into objects of beauty if we only realized the glory of toil.

His symbol is a flower. Could I ever forget when he put a flower into my buttonhole as if he were pinning on me a medal of rare distinction. He even seemed to caress the unfolded petals as he looked upon it with the ardent eye of the lover. Nature supreme asserts itself in the illuminating lines of "Beneath Rafter and Thatch."

He doesn't appear to be one who would sit down and force himself to write, for the gay revelers of thought seem to knock for admission at the portal of his dream castle. There is ever a merry band ready, when the gates are a-jar, to troop forth into the sunlit meadow of fantasy and song.

JOE MITCHELL CHAPPLE

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I

A DREAMER

A DREAMER! This remark, in a sneering tone of voice, cut most cruelly . . . for be it known dreamers usually are the possessors of sensitive natures. What is a dreamer? A dreamer is the greatest boon a Superior Wisdom has vouchsafed the dwellers of this mundane sphere. The world owes all great achievements to the dreamer. Not anything poor human hands hath wrought . . . whether for utility or beauty —no matter how simple or how stupendous—how practical the thing accomplished, it was once a dream in the mind of a dreamer.

Dreaming proceeds from a desire to create, which nothing else can satisfy. Dreams must precede action. First a dream, then the dreamer becomes a thinker and the idea is wrought out in its most minute detail. . . . Then wheels are set in motion, and at length the dream becomes reality—and the object whether for service or for ornament, stands complete.

Beneath the fleckless blue of Egyptian skies—at the edge of the Libian desert, a face with a majestic sadness in its eyes looks out over the limitless expanse of sand. In its imposing silence and august mein it seems to hold the wisdom of the ages.

From time immemorial the tawny sands have surged about it, but its flawless beauty . . . its stately dignity has remained unchanged—its mystery unsolved. Dynasties have arisen, flourished, and passed into oblivion. Still with the same inscrutable mysticism in the eyes, looking steadfastly into space.

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Once a ledge of grey granite, it at times lay deeply buried beneath drifting sands. . . . Sometimes the winds in their unobstructed course swept it bare, revealing its polished surface. . . . Then rays from morning sun flashed upon it a myriad javelins of flame. . . . The noonday sun beat upon it, through slow passing centuries.

There was a time when in a mind it floated, the vaguest film of a dream . . . which grew, took form, and as it progressed in strength and lucidity, became an obsession. Then thousands of busy hands removed the sand. . . . Thousands of chisels wrought tirelessly, through many days, until at length it stood forth in stately dignity and majesty . . . a dream realized.

What a Master mind was this that could conceive a dream so stupendous . . . so infinitely wonderful, and bring it to maturity! Whose image was this, that he gave to the world . . . that will endure until Time's last, lingering moment? Was it to commemorate some important event? Is it the representation of the face of some dearly beloved and lost one—that is chiseled here? Or is it the face of the Dreamer himself . . . that his memory might be perpetuated for all time in enduring granite? A dream realized, ah, yes! But who shall tell us the name of the dreamer?

A dreamer! In the year 532, in the mind of Justinian, was a dream of the restoration of a once stately Basilica, that had suffered frequent destruction . . . His dream was to rebuild the church in such a manner as to eclipse all former attempts, in magnificence, grandeur, and size. To encompass . . . or bring about this dream, a hundred architects were employed,

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each one having one hundred workmen under him. Of these, five thousand worked upon the right, and five thousand worked upon the left side of the building. . . . Each of the two sets vying with the other, which would be the first to complete their task.

To fulfill the magnificence of his dream. . . . This cathedral contains nearly every variety of the rarest known marbles in the world. The columns which they form alone number one hundred and seven. Gold itself was not thought valuable enough for its altars . . . therefore they were formed of a combination of rarest gems, set in gold and silver. The doors were of ivory, amber, and cedar.

Here, when crowned by achievement . . . the Christian ritual was performed until the year 1453, when through the changing fortunes of nations and men . . . When immediately after the capture of Constantinople, by the Turk . . . Mahamad II, said his prayers therein for the first time, June 1st, of that same year.

It then became the dream of Mahamad to convert it into a mosque . . . with a jeweled Mihrab, gilded domes, and slender minarets. Since that time, five times each day there has been a response to the call of the Mezzins—notwithstanding upon its walls are still to be seen portions of Scriptural texts . . . a pictured face of the crucified Christ, and high on its walls a shield bears the name of Jehovah.

Here night after night this magnificent structure, . . . with its myriad twinkling lights, at Ramazan—the month of prayer, have been reflected in the Sea of Marmora. San. Sophia has become a Moslem dream realized.

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Every imposing Old World cathedral that in its classic beauty lifts its vaulted dome and sculptured towers heavenward. . . . Those histories written in stone, whose jeweled facades were chiseled by hands of consecrated workmen, who wrought for the honor and glory of Almighty God, and not for worldly gain. Theirs, too, was a dream realized, and today their works are marvels of flawless beauty that fill the beholder with admiration and wonder. . . . While those who wrought those perfections of saints and angels—those arabesques of fruit and flowers, that live in the enduring stone—with their names unknown—their forms only a handful of forgotten dust. . . . Their works have followed through the ages, and will live on until eternity's dawn. . . . Realized dreams, wrought out in marble and granite.

Thus, even the lowliest country chapel, that lifts its white spire from out the vale, was once dreams in the mind of some consecrated dreamer.

Every bridge spanning our mighty rivers—every skyscraper—those creations of steel and concrete . . . every castle and palace . . . every home built for shelter and comfort, even to the plainest adobe hut on the mesa, or that of cane and palm thatch in the jungle, were once a dream in the mind of some dreamer.

A dreamer? Yes! Thus every masterpiece in literature. . . . Every poem was once a fancy—a dream floating in the brain of some dreamer. They followed day after day until they were revealed, word by word, sentence by sentence, until they were written down, and have found their way into the enduring adages of the world.

Even the humblest lines, in an obscure corner of

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some country newspaper—striving in its simplicity to voice the sentiment, the aspiration, or the anguish of some soul—were once dreams.

Never has there been a picture painted that was not first thought out, and originated in the mind of the artist. . . . Then bit by bit, with crude pigments it was builded—wrought out in heart's blood and prayer, until at length the perfected dream stood revealed—perhaps a priceless masterpiece that today is the world's heritage.

Every mechanical invention . . . from the simplest toy to the mighty leviathans that float the main, to the powerful locomotive that rushes across the continents . . . the aeroplane that cleaves the blue . . . the most delicate mechanism that crowns and blesses this peerless age, were once but dreams.

Dreamers? What would the world be today had there been no dreamers? We would, no doubt, be back to the age of Cave Men, living in holes in the rocks—killing our game with stone implements—eating their flesh raw. Who shall say they, too, were not dreamers? Had they not dreams of domestic needs . . . knew what they wanted and went after it?

Dreamers? Ah, yes! Are we not each of us dreamers? Who knows but that perhaps even the dreamer himself was once a dream.

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II

HARMONY

IF one would sense to the full the perfect harmony of Nature's symphony . . . in midsummer seek some nook—rock-shielded, with cooling shadows and wine-brown mosses—and there in the peace and seclusion of the place, drink in the melody of some glen-hidden brook.

Put afar all thought of earthly care. . . . Let only the soft ripples sing their song of gladness into the soul—endeavor to catch the subtle notes which produce such complete harmony . . . Desiring only that it may rightly interpret this brook-tongued message.

Through its flawless cadence, like a silver chord, runs a muted tone of mystical sweetness, that tells of myriad of tiny falls and riffles it has passed; gaining from each an added note . . . coining its gathered gladness into faultless melody of crystalline purity, and here in this shut-in glen yielding up the perfection of its divine symphony.

It sings of great boulders obstructing its course, that it might linger an instant—caressing their polished surface—misting their mosses, while whispering of hills and fields. . . . This message that is only for ears rightly attuned.

It tells, too, how this tiny stream has reflected all the moods of nature. . . . Gold-green in sunlight, azure from over-arching heavens, amber and brown in shadow, to rippled silver as it tinkles among the pebbles, or wimples across the shallows.

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One can detect in it the tone of far-off silver bells—the swish of grasses—of bird notes that rang in the intervales, and now at our feet, its last song e'er it falls asleep in the broad mirror-like pool that awaits its advent . . . where for a space it will help to form this sheet of tranquillity and then slip quietly under sun and stars to its final destination, the bosom of the boundless deep.

Harmony, harmony! This music of the brook is akin to that which the breeze awakens among the grasses of the plain, or mighty wind-swept uplands. Lie among the fragrant grasses of some meadow, where blossoms and grasses meet above tired eyes. Listen to its silken swish when zephyrs steal softly across the bending blades, that shut out sky and distant hilltops. Note well how the sustained chords of sweetness steal from the senses all care and weariness . . . while the soothing monotone of whispering grasses and fragrance of meadow blooms, like a Lethean wine, steeps the senses until all stress of life is stilled and soothed into a dream of ineffable peace.

Rest prone upon the tawny sands beside the boundless deep, with its limitless sweep of sunlit waters. . . . Catch the soothing overword of lapsing waves. "Rest, rest, rest!" The whisper of pines, the swish of breeze-swept grasses are blended in this harmony divine, which through all the ages the sea has ceaselessly sung.

Even in seasons of storm, when tremendous surges have dashed the mighty bulwarks, set by the Almighty hand . . . or broken upon the sands; still this magnificent crescendo is a master melody—flawless with its undertone, soothing as a lullaby . . . Although it

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may be lost to mortal ear which catches only the thundering, majestic tumult of waves, yet to the Master's ear it is perfect harmony, as that of the softly singing brook through meadow and glen.

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III

CATHEDRALS OF THE WOODS

IMPOSING, dim, and filled with mysteries, as the stately cathedrals overseas, are those shadow-filled aisles leading through a vast forest of evergreens. Here are nave and transept, with many side chapels, where grey boulders as altars may easily be imagined. . . . Ideal shrines for worship.

Clustered columns support the groined arches of the vaulted dome. Here the foot falls noiselessly, for nature through passing ages has carpeted, in a harmony of bronze and gold, the vast nave and transepts, with ply on ply of silken needles of pine that have dropped so silently each moment of every hour, day and night—as each zephyr has stirred the branches, rifling the healing balm. . . . The breath of balsam and pine that lingers perpetually here, like incense from service never ended—for the symphony never ceases which is played in God's organ loft. . . . The close set branches of perpetual green above.

Through the portal, and at the far end the sunlight falls as if through jeweled windows richly dight. It also glints softly through many wonder-fashioned apertures, filling the shrine with a mystical beauty . . . while it touches altar and graceful arabesque with a glory indescribable.

Here God's marvelous love is written in characters of living light, upon scrolls of His own designing—intelligible to all—it matters little of what nation, creed, or tongue. . . . Here are no seats for the mighty—

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here is no precedence. All men are equal, and their devotions, whether vocal or silent, is acceptable service to the Most High. Here can be no dissembling. . . . Those who worship God here must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for here we are in the presence of the Infinite, and as we kneel in the silence we are a guest of God.

There is a deep significance in worship in a forest sanctuary. . . . Kneeling where the sunlight falls so tenderly is like a reconsecration—a resurrection, for the soul is lifted for a space into a larger spiritual atmosphere, where it receives a finer ideal of life . . . affording strength and encouragement in the performance of its duties.

Alas! that such seasons are rare . . . that we enjoy so few care-free days—that we receive such brief glimpses of the glorious possibilities that are ours. Then as we kneel in God's temple of the woods, let us open wide every avenue of the soul, that we may receive the full measure of this needed rest, and the glorious harmony of nature. There is no hesitancy—no flaw in the rhythm of its stately recessional.

The instruments are multitudinous that are swept by the hand of the Master Musician, yet the symphony of nature is ever the same, without the variation of a half tone. Ever unending.

From far above comes a tender prelude—a whisper dying away to the faintest sigh. Now a zephyr breathing through the forest stirs the lower branches of the pines. As it lifts them each burnished needle softly gives forth a musical murmur—a soothing sibilant like a long-drawn "hus-s-sh" until it becomes only the ghost of a whisper of sustained "s-s," that scarcely touch the forest peace.

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This is followed by wave on wave of zephyrs, that lift all the boughs in a mighty strophe, until lost among the forest crown. Now, for a brief interval, there is silence while we catch the diapason among the far-off pines not unlike the sound of distant surges. . . . Then it sweeps the tree tops again in a crescendo of matchless melody.

Visit this cathedral of the woods, when the radiance has departed from the western sky, and night shades are deepening. Carefully put aside the thick mass of odorous boughs that screen the entrance of this wonderful temple. Step into the dense shadow of this cathedral aisle, so filled with awesomeness and mystery—so like the old world shrines when the last worshipper has departed and left one to the silence of a vast sanctuary.

At the threshold pause for a moment, that the eyes may become accustomed to the shrouded surroundings. . . . Sense for an instant the deep breathings—the subdued monotones of the gentle breeze in the crest of the pines, so like the far faint tones of silver bells of some vesper service. One waits with the head reverently bowed as in the presence of the Infinite.

One may be accustomed to every detail of this sanctuary by day. . . . This place at night is altogether different from that we have known. The clean, straight shafts of the tree trunks appear like massed columns of grey stone, scarcely discernible amid surrounding gloom. The side aisles are a wall of impenetrable darkness—the chapels, with immense boulders forming their altars, are no longer visible. The lofty arches of plumy boughs are quite blotted out, and as one passes the entire length of the unobstructed

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nave, there is not the least sound of footfall across the thick carpet of moss and fallen needles.

Within the subtility of shadows it is quite as if some invisible presence was astir. For an instant there may be a tension of breath and muscle, with every sense alert, awaiting developments. . . . Until the mind receives the assurance that one is absolutely alone in this night-wrapped cathedral of pines.

The peace and solemn beauty of the night—the hush, to the soul, is like a healing balm. . . . Nowhere is silence as impressive as in a woods at night. A sense as if the very spirit of silence—poised and breathless—pervades the place. . . The glittering stars wheeling above tinge the tree tops with ineffable beauty. One treads cathedral aisles of the night-hid forest, going softly as soul who fears.

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IV

THE WEAVER

LIFE has been likened to a loom, and we each, individually, a weaver, working out our destiny, our own life pattern. How many of the younger generation have seen a loom, or know what a loom is like, I wonder? For no more at the waning of the year is the steady beat of the cottage loom heard throughout the land, where the busy weaver plies the shuttle, slings the sley, and winds the woven yards of fabric upon the beam, until the web is finished and cut from the loom . . . leaving only the shortened thrums, that prove a fabric has filled the loom and is now completed.

Weaving is of great antiquity. The earliest products were from reeds, blades of grass, barks and thongs of leather. These crude fibers were crossed into each other and beaten into compact form and texture by some simple appliance, then were cut and fashioned into various articles of clothing and utility, long before the art of employing yarn from wool or hemp was dreamed of.

The Egyptians were the earliest producers of linen and other cloths, and had brought weaving to a high state of perfection as is attested by the wrappings about their mummies. The products of their looms were eagerly sought after by foreign nations.

In the vicinity of my early home, nearly every household possessed a hand loom, where the fabrics of either linen or wool were of their own producing.

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The garments when finished had been grown, spun, and woven, cut and fashioned by the same hands.

One of my earliest recollections is of my mother, spinning in the firelight. While her foot set into motion and maintained the steady movement of the wheel, her low, sweet songs blended with the soft whirr of the spindle as she sang her happy babes into peaceful slumber.

Memories come, too, of long hours when as a child I sat at the loom placing the warp into the harness, or hooked and drew the handed threads through the reed, preparatory to the weaving. Then for days there was the winding of bobbins, while mother plied the swift shuttle and beat the fabric into a web, which when finished and cut from the loom was weighed and measured, then sent to the fuller.

When the fulled and finished cloth was returned from the fuller, then there were busy days, for the mother hands cut and fashioned the winter garments for our comfort. . . . We foolish youngsters were oft-times somewhat mortified when we had to wear those same garments for our Sunday best. . . . They were sheep's gray, and home made! Today no price would be too great to pay for a Sunday suit of sheep's gray full cloth, such as mother spun and wove in the long ago.

Let me tell here the story of a loom.

The quaint Alsatian hamlet lay thralled in ineffable peace in afternoon sunshine, so serene it was not a leaf nor tendril stirred; faint from afar came the whisper of a glen-hid brook, the only sound that touched the outer edge of silence, harmonizing perfectly with the drowsiness of the hour and place.

Leaning against the slopes were the vineyards asleep

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in the sunshine; they extended to the very edge of the gnarled, beechen forest of moss-grown, silvery boles and glistening leaves.

Slightly apart from the hamlet, hemmed round by vineyards and quite at the edge of the ancient wood—in fact, beneath the spreading branches of a rustic beech—nestled a tiny cot, hoary with age, its tiles mellowed with time, gave to it a medieval touch most delightful.

In its dilapidation it still preserved a characteristic charm distinctive from the other dwellings of the little town. About the palings that enclosed the tiny plat of ground before the humble door, clustered masses of stately lilies, in their saintly purity and beauty, the ivies that wove in and out among the palings strengthened the barrier that shut out the world and gave an appearance as if it guarded some precious treasure of inestimable value.

About the low doorway some hand had trained a rose, now rampant grown, clothing the crumbling stucco walls with a riot of crimson bloom. Vegetables and blossoms elbowed each other in that little plat of ground, yet all a-drowse in sunshine.

This tiny cot was an abode of the humble, the lowly, an aged woman, who had known sorrow—where the uninvited guest—want, sat amidst the grey ashes of the hearth.

This day, on a philanthropic mission bent, I rapped upon the lintel of the open door. I had been told the occupant of this lowly domicile was the possessor of a faded tapestry which she was desirous of disposing of. Though her need was great, this tattered article was of no possible use to the dweller of the rustic hamlet,

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aloof from travel's beaten track, from tourist and relic hunter. It would be a charitable act, they told me, if I would purchase that which they considered an absolutely worthless article.

In response to my knock, an aged woman made her appearance and smilingly bade me enter. About this pathetic figure there was a naive, old-time grace, upon which the worn and much-bemended garments sat with a dignity which sables and satins do not always possess. As I took the humble seat offered, I could but glance about the room, so meagerly furnished, so scrupulously clean and tidy, from the freshly sanded floor to the snowy curtains at the tiny windows, with their potted carnations; I noted as well that the most had been made with the few adornments about the wall, which bespoke innate refinement.

My errand made known, I asked to be made acquainted with this article sought, providing there was a history attached with the same, that I might more readily decide upon its value, and if I should care to purchase it. This is her story:

For many generations the members of her husband's family had been weavers of tapestry. The profession had been taught by father to son as far back as could be ascertained. This particular tapestry now gone to tatters, and she feared quite worthless, had been woven by a remote ancestor of her late husband, who, in his turn, had also chosen this profession.

Having learned his trade, he was following the usual custom of all journeymen, that of traveling journeyman through different countries seeking employment in different shops, which usually occupies from one to three years.

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It was while on such a tour that their first meeting took place. It was one morning early, in the medieval church in the town where she resided with her parents. She had gone, as was a daily custom, to place an offering of flowers upon the altar of the Madonna.

It was an ornate, highly bejeweled altar, this of the Madonna, and when flooded with light falling through the richly-stained glass of an ancient window, it was marvelously beautiful and attracted visitors from many leagues about. To copy this effect, that he might reproduce it in some lily-bordered tapestry, had this journeyman come.

It was evidently a case of love at first sight, for he lingered long after the completion of his elaborate sketch. And each morning as she was leaving the shrine he mysteriously appeared. At first it was a smile, a lifting of his hat, then just a civil passing the time of day—Good Morning—then an interest in the sketch, and at last a plighted troth. On such simple things hang the destinies of mankind.

When their wishes were made known to her parents, they ordered him from their presence, forbade their meeting, and took measures to prevent same. When separation became unbearable, they met clandestinely —then banns were published in a distant parish, and they were secretly married.

He brought his young bride to his home, where the ancestral doors were closed against them; this marriage with a peasant maiden was an insult to their social standing, and had frustrated their plans for an alliance to a noble house. It is the old, old story repeated, so he gathered his few belongings, came to this hamlet among the Alsatian hills, purchased this tiny cot with

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its plat of garden—set up his loom, where he worked steadily, sending the finished product to the best markets, thus a sufficient livelihood was assured, until one fatal day an invention was placed upon the market whereby a tapestry, absolutely perfect in its manufacture, might be produced at one-half the price of those made by hand.

As is ever the case with an unappreciative public, the new-fangled product had the precedence over the older method, and it fell into disfavor. With no further demand for his work, their means soon became exhausted, and the wolf came in at the door, but in this case love did not fly out at the window.

He would make one supreme effort, her husband said; he would produce the altar scene from the ancient cathedral that certainly must find favor and a ready sale. Thus he wrought steadily, nor lost heart until there was no longer means wherewith to purchase material.

To help what she could she had found employment in the harvest fields, binding sheaves, or gleaning after the reapers, or some few and far between bit of work in the homes of the villagers. This was a great wound to his pride, but one must live!

One evening, returning from the fields laden with her sheaf she had that day gleaned, no beat of the loom greeted her through the gloaming. She found him seated at the loom, his head bowed upon his folded hands,—his heart had broken.

"Come, I will show you!"

She led to the inner room. In one corner stood a hand loom, just as if left a moment before by the weary weaver—the warp, the woof, everything in its place,

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upon the fabric. Before the sley and headel lay the waiting shuttles, with the wound yarns in their order. Above them hung the finished sketch made so long ago in the old cathedral, its reproduction already taking form in the woven web that fell over the breast beam like an altar cloth. Each side of the sketch stood a battered, ancient, but highly-burnished candlestick, each with its taper ready for the lighting.

About this loom on the floor were distributed several potted geraniums, trained against its four posts. From a small window at its side, from which one of the tiny, round-headed panes had been removed, afforded free access to numerous thrushes and linnets, who builded and reared their young in the wicker cages hung about the loom, and filled that humble room with song and cheer. Through this orifice a spray of ivy, too, had found its way and had flourished through the years until it had wreathed the upper portion of the loom, and o'er canopied it with living green. The loom had been converted into a household shrine.

She took from its ancient receptacle—a carved chest, a folded and much be-tattered cloth, and spread it before me. It was the representation of some mythological subject, and faded and subdued into a neutral tinting, that to a collector of antiques might be priceless. I, who am not up to those things, could not estimate its true value. As I gravely considered this problem, a look of anxiety and disappointment crept into the pinched face.

"Oh, sir, as it is of no use to me, you may have it at your own price if you will only take it!" she said.

"Do you also wish to dispose of the old chest?" I asked.

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"I shall be very glad to do so, and, anyway, it belongs with the fabric," she told me.

Here was a case of need, and distress, which no person with the least spark of humanity and regard for right could take an advantage of. So when I took my departure, upon the unfinished web, in the altar loom, lay a little pile of shining gold pieces, more than she had ever possessed in all her life. The chest and its contents were to be called for later.

The formation of character has been likened to a weaver at his loom, where the weaving goes steadily on; never ceasing. . . . It is not a question whether or no the work shall go on, for the warp is constantly being unwound from eternity. The woof is lying all about us, for the weaving of the fabric we call life. The choice is ours whether the combination of colors and the pattern shall clash, and be distorted, or the result beautiful. It matters not how careless, or worthless the weaver, no one can sit at his loom and sling an empty shuttle. . . . With every throw there must be crossed threads, and each heart beat must correspond with the beat of the headdle. . . . There is ever a filled bobbin in the shuttle, and a web is being woven with every pulse beat, each passing moment. There can be no respite from the continuous task.

We may sing at our weaving or groan at our task, with discontent and complainings. . . . If we put all our heart and spirit in the work, with faith and lofty ideals, then with the efficiency acquired a marvelous pattern will take form under our weaving.

Life is not all sunshine, and the weaver may not always know just what is in his loom. Frequently

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the most royal of patterns are out-wrought under gloom and buffetings of sorest trouble and distress.

It matters little how discordant the hues—how crude the blending—how knotted and rough the earth side of the fabric may appear. If we have put forth our best effort, the weaving upon the heavenly side, which God alone sees, will reveal a pattern into which all our hopes, prayers, desires, and earnest strivings have gone, forming a picture of infinite strength and harmonious blending.

We each are a weaver, the mesh of which are dreams, most exquisite. A fabric shot through with the golden threads of desire—the silver threads of hope. Marvelously beautiful those woven webs, too joyous—too bright for this earth, in which few ever attain their ideals. . . . There is constantly a straining and outreaching for higher—greater things beyond. Still while we weave we dwell in enchanted gardens—rove the valleys of content, where constantly golden bells of happiness are rung, and for the time being we are richly—thrillingly alive.

If only our dreams came true! The humblest abode becomes a palace grand when transformed by dreams. Thank God for dreams! They bridge many a season of loneliness and sorrow, bring hope to despair, while they form a little wall about each weaver, a shut-in world that is all their own.

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V

APRIL DAYS

THE pussy-willows along the creek that sings through the lower pasture lot, are sheeted with silver, the catkins are full grown, ready for the tasseling and showering of pollen upon the breeze. The brown water foams and gurgles as it glides onward brimming the banks from edge to edge; each ripple catching the gold of sunshine and dappling the rocks and logs with its flashing glory.

A faint tinge of green is appearing along the banks, and in marshy places the water-plaintain is pushing its arrow heads above the last year's submerged weeds and dead grasses. The bold marsh marigold, commonly known as cowslip, is already in bloom.

Maple buds are swelling, there is a crimson tinge over all the woods. Grim old boulders wear epaulets of vivid emerald. In sheltered hollows remnants of snowdrifts are still hiding from the direct rays of the sun, but at their very edges, hidden beneath the sodden leaves, fragrant pink buds are lading the air with sweetness. In a few days they will appear in all their pink profusion, and the chubby hands of children, now filled with catkins, will bring us the arbutus instead. Here and there the purple leaves of the anemones are uncurling; in their sheltered hold buds are thickly clustered. Robins are here; we catch their call from the orchards where, newly-mated, they are ready for the building and the setting up of housekeeping.

Along the gray woods and through the hollows a pair

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of bluebirds flash their note of color. Somewhere in the woodland depths a woodpecker is beating his tit-tat-too. A chipmunk chatters, and notwithstanding there still is a chill in the air, we rejoice in the assurance that Spring is here, and as proof we sight the pussy-willows with their catkins. For many evenings the ponds have been vocal with the hylas calling their "Knee-deep, knee-deep!"

Crossing the upland pasture, every furrow and runlet is filled with golden water wimpling to the streams. Every cradle among the knolls is brimmed, smiling in the spring sunshine, with a bit of fallen sky hidden like a jewel in its heart.

At the farther end of the brook, where it forms a little wier, the lads have set their wheels, and ships formed of bits of bark, from decaying stumps and logs, are laden with all varieties of grain, in the form of sand, which they are sending down to imaginary grist mills. Beside the stream a miniature city is planned. Parks and manufactories, homes and churches are outlined with pebbles. There are shouts and mirth of happy voices, capsized barques and wetted feet, where the venture has been too near the treacherous edge of the stream. They heed little such mishaps, however, those care-free lads. Strange how much enjoyment can be crowded into one brief Saturday afternoon.

Some new idea has struck those lads, for they are up and away. The laden barques are stranded, the mimic city scattered and well nigh obliterated. The tramp of hastening feet dies away, the laughter and sound of merry voices grows fainter and dies into silence in the solemn depth of the hemlock forest. Happy lads!

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Slowly I take my way to the deserted playground. Thus we leave our interests, shatter our hopes, send out our ships upon life's sea, only to be stranded, never to return laden with the golden treasures we so much desired. "When my ships arrive," we said, while we waited expectantly, hopefully. Now we shake the head sadly as we whisper, "Nevermore."

Away with such remembrances in this season of awakening spring, with its sunshine, the music of its hurrying waters, its first song of birds, the peeping of the hylas. No grieving over the past will bring its joys again. The afternoon is ours, not a moment shall be stolen from its keen enjoyment, by any trace of regret.

We watch the day-god as he passes over the rim of the world; we turn for one more look over field and budding wold. We gather a spray of pussy-willow, and gently stroke our face with the velvety catkins as we thoughtfully fare homeward along the country highway.

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VI

CONJECTURE

"I HAD much rather take your word for it than to investigate the matter," is a remark we sometimes hear. It was Stearne who said, "Mysteries which must explain themselves are not worth the time which a conjecture about them takes up." Still there are many things about which we love to give our imagination free play—about which we love to dream—to weave beautiful fancies. About no object do they cluster more closely than about some deserted habitation, doorless, windowless—fast falling into decay.

We dream of all the precious associations surrounding the place. The joys, the sorrows, the struggles, the triumphs, the little ones who gathered about the hearth, who played about the door. We think of those who went so hopefully forth from that olden portal into the thronging world. We imagine them in homes of their own, scattered up and down the earth. We think tenderly of homesick hearts that turn with infinite longing to this dear old place, so sacred to memory. We might follow this out indefinitely, and while we dream the heart grows tender, the eyes become misted, and yet it is only conjecture.

In Egypt, for ages a sealed tomb had sacredly guarded the precious dust committed to its trust. There in its unbroken peace, the emblamed remains of an Egyptian potentate had rested in darkness and silence as passed the lagging centuries.

About this pretentious tomb the tawny sands of the

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Libyan desert had sifted, drifted, and surged until all traces became obliterated. . . . Then passed from the memory of men, until the investigations of an Archeologist, in his search for knowledge, with his helpers, patiently and laboriously removed the jealous sands, bucketful by bucketful, until at length dome and column arose from its shrouding hold, and stood revealed in its marvelous beauty, flooded with radiant sunshine, beneath the fleckless blue of Egyptian skies.

What did this tomb contain? What treasures guarded so inviolably through the passing ages? Conjecture all, until they learned from hieroglyphics. . . . That story written in stone, by some hand that for ages and ages has been forgotten dust. Still the chisel marks remained, fresh and sharp, as if but an hour previous the workman had left the completed task.

One wonders what must have been the emotions of Marieta when on entering this tomb he saw in the sand upon the floor the imprint of the naked feet of the last Egyptian who left it, thirty-seven centuries previous—the last one to look upon the form of his beloved sire or master.

It might have been wife or sweetheart, left for an interval beside her precious dead, before the tomb was sealed, as they then thought—for all time—little dreaming that thirty-seven centuries hence stranger hands would lift from its resting place this swathed, mummied form, and removing the wrappings, would give it a place in the glazed case in some museum, to be gazed and commented upon by a curious, nauseated, vulgar public.

One can imagine the lifted veil—the tears splashing down upon that swathed, unconscious form, as she

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bent tenderly above it in that final farewell. Wife or sweetheart? Conjecture! How does one account for the absence of sandals in the case of a lady of quality or rank? Conjecture again! Still it might have been customary in those long, forgotten ages for one to enter a mausoleum occupied by the dead . . . as one might enter the holy of holies with unshod feet.

In the case of this departed ruler, did they omit the things so sacred, and closely associated with their dead, the tear vials, coins, the jewels, and amulets? Or had this tomb been rifled, its sanctity desecrated? For it was destitute of all save the mummied form. Were the naked footprints, those of the vandal? Those accusing footprints, like the present Bertillon system, the accusing, the uncontrovertible fingerprints of the thief and assassin of today? This must forever remain conjecture.

Recently I was invited to meet a learned scientist, a stranger coming to our city. A mutual friend chanced to be present, when at once the two gentlemen began a discussion which lasted for several hours. They discoursed very learnedly upon the theories of Darwin, Huxley, and others. Their pretentious line of reasoning might be summarized thus:

Life appeared upon this planet some four hundred thousand years ago. Millions of years previous to that our planet floated a faintest vapor, among similar clouds, through space. . . . Then the vapor liquefied, became globular in form, and the whirling ball began to rotate around the great attracting body. They then told how, as the centuries passed life appeared, and living organisms became more and more complex. . . . while the earth underwent the slow process of cooling.

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Then it became clothed with plant life—still there were no blooms. Conjecture!

I have an idea they were not quite clear in their mind how blossoms came to materialize, but argued it was by the reaction of insects and bright colored leaves upon one another . . . How there were infinite forms of life that sprang from each other, or from one central stock, and the process of variation continued. In the course of time . . . amid such strange environments, a small, upright creature made its appearance (he was little superior to the apes of the present day), yet this brown, hairy specimen, wizened and stunted in stature, was our immediate progenitor. Then they discussed the development of the human form—the growth of intelligence—the advent of the soul. . . . Here they floundered in deep waters, the ideas advanced were only conjecture.

The transmission of the soul into the body, whether at conception or birth, must forever remain a mystery. . . . Whether it leaves the body before death, or at the moment of expiration, or if it lingers for a season, or until after dissolution, as far as we are concerned, must forever remain conjecture.

These gentlemen even tried to fix the state of the soul, in the hereafter, and were just about as clear in the matter as they were in those preceding ones. At length they arose, clasped hands, with smiles and mutual satisfaction, in their farewell. It had been a great output of words—a learned discussion. They went their way, and left me with the one thought, conjecture!

In my little sanctum, beneath rafter and thatch, this thought is presented: Why vex the soul with

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such needless conjectures. After dissolution, that most blessed of all mercies of the Almighty, those things will be explained to our entire satisfaction, providing we shall care to know. Why not leave such inscrutable things to God? Had He wanted us to understand those things, He would have made them known, leaving no room for conjecture. Cannot we leave it to His wisdom? Why trouble about fundamentals, and things that perplex the soul? Whatever conclusions we may arrive at, can only be conjecture, the same as the naked footprints in the dust of that Egyptian tomb, among the sands of the Libyan desert.

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VII

IN THE NIGHT

"Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."—*Psalm* 139:ii.

IT is the hour of evening shadows, peaceful and still. Opened wide is the tiny casement beneath the thatch of my attic gable, and leaning far out the night-hid world seems like an immense temple of silence. What a gorgeous picture is framed in by this casement, of a star-gemmed firmament, where mighty planets are wheeling their perfect course. . . . where the broad, star-paved Milky Way lies in its marvelous brilliancy . . . a pathway for shining feet of an angelic host, that extends into infinity. It is not difficult to believe that myriads of feet have passed out along that glittering street, that must surely mark the way leading up to the throne of the Most High.

As gazing upon the scented darkness beneath me, there comes no jarring of the world's turmoil. There is naught except the gentle stirring of zephyrs among the tree-tops, breathing the soothing note of rest to a tired world.

Night is a great purifier. . . . All things appear holier in the light of scintillating stars. Night airs are purest that blow across the snowy summits of some mountain range, and lift the crests of sentinel pines.

The diapason of the sea—the lapsing of waves along the sands, heard at night, seem laden with a message of strength, peace and hope. Prayers uttered beneath

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the stars are holy, and seem to ascend to the very throne. Songs sung in the night-hid vales—upon the highways, or some vast plane always take on the loftier strain and noblest phrasing. . . . Songs of lesser meaning and frivolity have no place in the night. The singer impressed with the awesomeness , the mystery of night, rises above the mediocre, the common place things of life, and so the lips voice the fullness of the heart.

Brought to me upon the gentle wings of a stray zephyr comes the resinous odor of pines, together with the faintest murmur of their burnished needles. It may be only imagination, so subtle the seeming. . . . Yet what does it matter, if one cannot distinguish the difference? The sensation is the same. Oft times our dreams, our imaginings, bring their comfort, their cheer. Perhaps alone into the night, under the stars go the disappointed, the sorrowing souls, to cope with their anguish and thus renew their strength to combat with the powers of darkness, to meet bravely the duties of life.

Under the stars, the mind freed from the nagging, perplexing cares of the day, one can more readily encompass and cope with the greater problems of life, for the vision is clearer. . . . The mind expands, and decisions reached are usually those that are acted upon. One cannot sit within a closed room and think as clearly, even in a subdued light or darkened space. It needs the influence of star light—dewfall—mystery, and a myriad subtle things that go into the making of the night. It were vain to try to fathom the night. . . . She is veiled, inscrutable. Things familiar by day take on strange aspects, strange, shapes, and clothe themselves in mystery.

Would one experience the majesty of night? Then

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alone at midnight stand upon the upper deck of a vessel, far out at sea, that mightiest of all God's handiwork. . . . Upon either hand extends a dark, restless expanse of silken waters, interwoven with star beams. A close-fitting dome above where stars (and nowhere are they more brilliant than at sea), like lamps of heaven are they hung. So close they seem, for one has a sense as if it but needed to reach out to touch the horizon.

One feels as being within a little shut-in space of mystery and silence. . . . Poised and motionless. Illimitable space above . . . unfathomable depths beneath. Terrifying thought! And yet the sense is one of awe, wonder, and trust, and the appealing isolation and quietude of the hour.

Should queenly night walk the deep with sea winds in her mantle's fold, and being buffeted, one clings to the rail for support. . . . Above the scudding vapors, about one the heaving, raging billows, and beneath the appalling depth. There may be a feeling of utter helplessness, but with it all a blending of ecstasy and awe, and that assurance of being safely cradled within the Almighty arms. The sense is one of overmastering rapture and content.

Go out upon the broad plain at night, where there is only earth and sky, and vastness. . . . Immeasurable vastness! Seemingly all one's own. The mighty sweep of the vision, with its shadowy uplift of mountain peaks. . . . About one the sweep of sand dunes—the ghostly yuccas—the stretch of purple sage, and an overarching expanse of heavens, where stars are sown broadcast. . . . Great, yellow orbs, lighting the darkness with a softly-shaded lustre, like veiled lamps. . . . The encompassing calm—the pulsing silence of the night.

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Lying there, securely wrapped in your blanket, you are indeed alone with the Almighty! It is then one realizes the holiness of night, with a sense of security and peace beyond all words. There is an aloofness from all the ills that infest the broad day. The night seems rife with promises and mysteries half revealed. . . . And what imaginings come with the night! To the soul comes no disturbing elements—no fears. A season that nearest touches divinity.

Would one realize the purity of night? Then climb above the timber line, when the last faint trace of afterglow has faded from the snowy peaks. There sheltered and safe in the lea of some immense boulder, note how crystal clear the heavens are outspread above, where stars scintillate like gems of purest ray, and flawless. Above one looms the alabaster peaks lifting up their stainless snows in the presence of Jehovah. . . . Those battlements of purity, where the stars above them look down upon a sleeping world. . . . a world newly washed in silver.

There, alone, sheltered, uplited and sustained, above a shadowy world there comes the consciousness of awful gorges beneath, in whose sheltered depths the shadows are never disturbed. Sentinel pines, ranged in serried ranks, whose towering crests are far, far beneath. It is then one fully senses the littleness, the frailty of humanity. . . . And yet one has a consciousness of purification, a shriven soul might experience when singled out by the Almighty for His especial care and tenderness. A peace pervades that lofty, isolated place, that speaks of lasting things beyond.

Yea, verily, the night is holy! And so I lean far out, letting the soul drink in the blest influence.

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VIII

KNOW THYSELF

FEW men are acquainted with themselves, nor the relationship which they sustain toward their Maker. Daily, hourly, coming into contact with their fellow-men, amid the rush and turmoil, the din and clash of this rapid age, they become a part of all this stress and strife. There is scarcely a moment's surcease. The restful calm of the twilight brings no balm, no healing, to care-filled brain or quivering flesh.

There is no time for even a moment's pause in the great silence that prevails when fawn footed twilight hushes the vales to rest when there might be the putting aside of cares that vexed the day, and in the great hush let its blessed balm sink into the soul, to feel its expansion, its reaching out for higher, better things.

For many years, Self and I walked together as strangers. It was not given me to see my true self, nor my relationship to my Maker, until alone in foreign lands, a stranger, where even the language spoken was not understood. It was then in the holy hush, the vastness of great cathedrals, that I came to know the Great Jehovah, to speak with Him, as it were, face to face.

Out in the sunlit spaces, out upon the white highways, I have walked with Him hand in hand, trustingly as a little child. There has been no earthly cravings, no greed, no warring of the lusts of the flesh, only a sinking of self in this great Fatherhood of God that pervades the universe.

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The weakness of flesh, worldly ambitions, the littleness of earthly greatness, the sham, the worthlessness of human applause, the glow and glory of position, the false glitter of wealth, all are stripped of false garb and stand in stark nudity. We have not known ourselves. Is this I? We appear to self an entirely different being. We have never realized the innate purity that pervades the soul; never so fully have we sensed the desire for the higher, purer things; this great outreaching of the soul for God. We have not known how near He can be, how loving, how tender a Father He has proven, how gently He has led us, by paths of safety, of which we have not dreamed.

Beside vast seas I have sensed His immensity that fills the universe. In the depth of solemn forests, in the solitude of mountain fastnesses He has whispered such precious messages of comfort and cheer, has brought the soul an uplift and peace that passeth all understanding. It is, indeed, a great thing to have been lifted even for a moment into a larger spiritual air, to have caught a finer ideal of life.

Ofttimes it has been the calm of a star-gemmed night. Sometimes the heart of the storm, when great tempests have uprooted the oak or shattered rocks, that with a sense of utter helplessness has come also a sense of perfect trust.

It is among vast throngs, in the midst and stress of hurrying multitudes that His peace has encircled and shut me in, as if held apart from it all. By devious ways have I been led, step by step have I climbed from the mire and pitfalls of life until loftier heights, with clearer atmosphere have been gained.

In the rougher contact with the world I have not

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always been able to sustain this position, but invariably the evening's calm, the peace and seclusion of my sanctuary restores my equilibrium. There comes a gradual rounding into calm, a gentle uplift, a reaching up for the Hand whose clasp brings healing and strength in its slightest touch; in His blessed presence there is rest.

Learn to know thy heavenly Father! Leave thy soul in the healing dews of His grace. Keep firm hold of that hand that never faileth. Strive for His presence constantly, then life will have a broader, fuller meaning. Things that perish will have for thee no worth. Seek earnestly the things that are above. Strive after God. Step by step climb upward from the clod. Fear no failure, for when earthly strength can climb no further, then God's hand will reach and lift thee up, and thou shalt enter into thine heritage.

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IX

A DRIFTWOOD FIRE

OUTSIDE is a vast wonder-world. Silence—moonlight—snow. A symphony in white. Roof and tree seem carved in pentelic marble. Timbers snap in the cold. Smoke ascends straight to the zenith. A peace profound pervades the white marvel of the great out-of-doors.

Within the seclusion and sanctity of my study there is peace made tangible. The firelight flickers softly over the subdued hues of the binding of my silent friends. Here and there a name, a title, stands revealed, of some book in which is enshrined the very soul—the best thought of the eminent and talented dead, who have bequeathed to the world this priceless heritage.

The leaping flames bring them into prominence for an instant, then flicker and die, when they retire to the shadow, like the brief, mortal life of those great souls of earth, who lived out their little span, then lay down with their fathers, leaving behind them their profound wisdom—their loftiest thoughts, and a memory in grateful hearts.

The light flickers gently across tapestry and hangings, lighting for an instant their fading tints, touching gilding and bronze. Now a pictured face stands forth, or some treasured bit of landscape, then, too, the shadow receives them.

The depth of an easy chair. A driftwood fire, with its tongues of iridescent flame—its warmth—its cheer.

A driftwood fire. In its glow what a place to dream,

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letting the thoughts come and go at their own free, sweet will. How the long unthought-of memories of past scenes and vanished years—the faces and voices of old-time friends revive once more, with all their pristine beauty and freshness, come to cheer and bless in this sacred hour dedicated to memory.

A blessed renewal of the sweet things of life recalled, like the remembered fragrance of roses in the yester-Junes, or the scent of crushed apple blossoms in the old orchard at home.

With it all comes the sense of the very spirit of life that lifts one from the dullness—the greyness of the present and raises to a higher plane of spiritual ecstasy, leading one at length into the very presence of the Infinite.

A drift-wood fire! Those fragments—playthings of wind and wave—brought to us from far-off isles and deep lagoons—of wrecks at sea that have drifted in forgotten waters, but brought surely at length to a friendly shore, and cast up, and snatched again by the hungry undertow—worn and polished with their frequent contact with boulder and sand, until like some worthless plaything to a tired child, it is cast far upon the tawny sand, or shingle, just beyond the eager clutch of the undertow, and thus we gladly gather it for our winter evening's fire and yield ourself to the dreams and memories its bright embers awaken.

"And as their splendor flashed and failed,
We thought of wrecks upon the main;
Of ships dismasted, that were hailed
And sent no answer back again."

As stick by stick we place them upon the coals, we ponder their uses, the places they occupied.

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Perhaps this fragment was once a portion of some vessel's hull, that sailed the broad main visiting many strange countries, bringing treasures of spice and wine from far-off isles.

This may be a portion of a broken spar, and may have been the frail support of some hapless castaway, drifting upon a chartless sea.

This shapeless bit, maybe, is from some broken oar which floated when the fisher barque went down. Thus we may only conjecture, for life, the secret of the ages; only eternity shall reveal them to us, providing we shall care to know. But tonight in my driftwood fire, I have my memories. Joyous—sorrowful—tender.

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X

THE PRESENT

THIS present moment—the now—is the jeweled link in the golden chain so swiftly passing between two illimitable eternities. . . . The one, like some mighty onrushing tide crested with possibilities—the other like some triumphant host bearing its spoils. Opportunities, deeds, words, thoughts, joys and sorrows—led into a captivity from which there is no escape—no return.

Not this day, nor tomorrow—but the present moment alone is ours. The moment before us may be freighted with the signal that will call us hence.

What momentous achievements might be ours if we realized this fully and were to employ each passing moment as if it were to be our last. It might be a rather strenuous existence, for we should find work and life and love are all one great force, leading men to the consummation of their higher ideals. Were we to employ this force in all the avocations of life, we should find also that life was vouchsafed to man that he might accomplish the greatest good to the world—fit himself for the hereafter, the possibilities, and the perfection of eternity, toward which he is hastening with the ceaseless passing of the now. That life was not given mortals to be frittered away in indolence and frivolity, but that each might bear some part in the world's great symphony of toil.

There are those who have never given a thought that the present moment of time is all that they are

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certain of. . . . They pass through life and never realize its true significance—nor sense their responsibilities . . . but are continually planning for the years to come, when theirs is to be a life of ease and plenty—a life of enjoyment. They are ever looking and planning for the future, and missing the joys of the present—the now.

"Life is real, life is earnest!" yet it need not be too strenuous . . . need not all be reduced to feverish work—there are many sweets and enjoyments to be extracted by the way. . . . The foremost is home and friends. We ought to get all the joy out of our loved ones as we pass along.

Pause a moment and enjoy the prattle, the merry laughter, the sports of our children. Tomorrow they will be men and women, battling with the world's momentous problems. They will have gone out from our homes, leaving a void that only their childish presence and voice can fill.

Cease complaining of the worry and care—of the litter of playthings—over the soiled hands and faces—of garments that need such frequent changing—such constant attention. They will soon be only a memory, and like the present will have passed forever.

Is there a radiantly beautiful sunset? Lay aside the task of the moment, however important. Enjoy this exquisitely tinted picture the Master Painter has displayed in the heavens for our delectation. . . . A moment and it will have passed forever. God does not paint the same picture a second time.

Falls the light softly along the hills? Does it gleam across rippling waters? It will never fall in just the same way again. Is there a tender tinting of sky, with

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grand pageant of fleecy clouds? They are constantly changing.

The pathos of an unanswered letter may become a life-long regret. Our friend may not write again. The world is small, yet it has a way of taking unto itself our loved ones, and they become lost to us forever. There may never be a better opportunity than the present for the answering of such a letter.

It is the same with words of commendation—words of endearment. They will not be heeded, nor bring comfort spoken above a casket-enshrined form.

Neither will it avail aught to sit and brood over the past, eternity enfolded. It can never be recalled. Was our eyes so holden that we saw not then the things that now appear so delightful—so greatly to be desired? Are we making better use with our clearer vision? Are we improving the present, so there will be no regrets when we look back upon it in the years to come? Oh, the possibilities of the Now, which still is ours—the opportunities that may not come again.

The present is ever fraught with great possibilities. . . . The future may hold regrets, for spurned opportunities, undisciplined wills, promises unfulfilled, and vows unredeemed.

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XI

RELIGION

RELIGION is the semblance, or outward form, by which men indicate their belief in a Supreme Being, who directs the universe and rules our destiny . . . to whom we owe fealty and obedience as well as service, and honor which are due. It is an expression of man's reverence . . . or awe for this overruling Power—whether by profession or observance of rites.

It is also the aspiration of the soul . . . in faith, reaching out for the Infinite. Like some aborigine, that poor child of nature, with his "untutored mind" lighting his signal fire to the Great Spirit. It may be but a tiny spark upon some dew-wet shadow-hidden boulder upon some hill crest. . . . Following in imagination the filmy spiral of smoke that ascends straight upward to the zenith—that imperian of light, where in his childlike belief dwells the Almighty.

Life and religion are one. . . . We live our religion. It is consecration to life's tasks. Its proof is not in assertion about it, but in being it. Its simple profession has little weight. . . . It does not consist in creeds, or rituals. There are no set forms. Each man is a religion unto himself, and his daily life attests his devotion . . . his mode of worship.

A recognition—a firm belief in the Deity, are the first essentials. A desire—a reaching out for the Almighty, with aspirations for an ideal . . . A craving for the Infinite—for heights we have not yet attained.

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As we come to realize more and more fully the importance of life . . . the things for which we were created, in that proportion will life take on a truer, fuller significance, and we shall come more and more to understand how great a thing life is, and its possibilities as well.

There are limitations in each one of us. "No stream can rise higher than its source," and Scripture saith, "As a man thinketh, so is he." There are depths in every soul that only the Almighty can probe—depths of which we have never been fully conscious . . . unexplored depths! Knowledge is Godliness—knowledge is power!

The principal trouble with many of us—we leave to others the thinking we should do for ourselves. Accepting their ideas, and trying to conform our lives with their standards, and calling this religion.

We should respect every man's religious convictions. His strivings, however feeble, ought to be appreciated —for every soul knows the depth of its sincerity . . . the strength of its endeavors.

Service is worship, and true religion consists not in outward form and semblance . . . but that motive power from within that impels men to greater endeavor, greater service, for the pure joy of serving. The teacher, the scientist, the writer, the poet, the sculptor and painter, as well as the prophet and priest have this incentive. . . . Religion is a creative power, emanating from Jehovah through the soul, for the useful service of man.

Every person who searches his own soul to know where he stands in his relationship to the Almighty—the full meaning of the religion he professes and lives.

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. . . He must throw wide every avenue—open every window to the light, that he may know himself as does the Almighty, who reads the record of his soul.

This must not be done in a perfunctory manner . . . but with sincerity and a prayerful desire that will brook no doubt. Then our religion will stand the tests of worlds and time, and we shall each find the kingdom of heaven is within us. . . . Then the religion we live will be to all men like some voiceless message, too great for words.

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XII

PRAYER

IT has been said there are seasons when no matter the attitude of the body, the soul is ever on its knees in prayer.

Kneeling, the head bowed in deep humility, or standing, the head uncovered, the eyes reverentially raised, is considered by many to be the proper attitude in prayer. . . . Yet this is not prayer. The true need, the sincere desire of the heart is that which the Almighty respects. The cry of a contrite soul is that which reaches the ear of the Supreme Being, seated upon His everlasting throne in that empyrean, the Holy of Holies.

Prayer is fellowship with the Almighty . . . A looking up into God's face, with fullest confidence and trust . . . Believing that He hears and will answer prayer to the joy and satisfaction of those who come to Him for strength and help. Therefore prayer is the greatest power man possesses, and prayer to be effectual must have a definite purpose. It matters not how stammeringly a petition may be presented, our Heavenly Father will attend to the results.

Words that come haltingly and broken are oft times made burning and eloquent by the desires which prompt them. . . . If our motives be right, then will we pray aright, and results those which the Almighty directs. Prayer is the turning of the face toward Jehovah, thereby He works out His purpose.

Prayer to be effectual must be voluntary . . . not

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forced or through fear. One who is forced to his knees has, indeed, the attitude, but never the true sense of prayer. . . . That which is wrung from the heart by mortal terror may, indeed, be a cry—a plea for help—yet would it have been uttered unforced? There are those who turn to the Almighty only when they have reached the limit of their boasted strength, and realize how puny that strength is.

One who calmly, humbly, seeks the Throne of Grace and pours his needs into that ever-waiting ear, pays little heed to the attitude . . . which invariably is the correct one. . . . True prayer is wrought out in deep humility, upon the knees, alone with God. The words may not be carefully chosen, but the cry is of the heart's true need. . . . Presented with an earnestness and sincerity, that will brook no denial. "Save, Lord, or I perish!"

Prayer is the means by which we come into the presence of Jehovah—by which we enter the holy of holies. Should the prayer be the stricken cry of the penitent . . . What matter if the face be in the dust, it is the true attitude of the soul. There is no dissembling. The cry that shall be uttered comes only from the *De Profundis* of anguish and despair.

When the heavens smile, and all goes well with the world, men do not always sense the true need of the soul. It is when the waters of affliction arise, and seas of despair 'whelm them, that they fly for safety and help to the true refuge—the Rock of our salvation. . . . That impregnable stronghold that never fails. The sincere prayer to be shown the way—to be led aright, that follows hour after hour, in the midst of our joy, or the duties of life, is more efficacious in the

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uplifting and purification of the soul, in preparing it to meet and combat the stern realities of life, has helped us across the rougher places and lifted us to serener heights than we shall ever realize, until we are beyond the counting of the years.

Let us not for any selfish motive or desire turn the trend of our petitions entirely to personal advantages, hoping for stupendous results, for selfish prayers—petitions for earthly advancement, or worldly gain, availeth little. No matter how earnest the prayer for desired things, whose possession would be for our detriment, are as so much empty air blowing across desert wastes. Let us heed for which we ask, lest being granted, they become our undoing. It were better if all petitions, presented at the throne of the Most High, were left in His tender hands . . . With grateful submission and trust in His perfect wisdom.

Prayer should have a fixed—definite purpose, to find the will of our Heavenly Father, and then make this the principal desire of our petition.

Prayer may be capable of far-reaching influences and ought not all be reduced to self. . . . There is the world at large, with its great needs. The anguish of the afflicted—the sorrows of the bereft. Have we no thought or time for these? What greater boon can be bestowed than a part in our petitions, which must ever be offered in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord? This is essential. We can only approach the Father through His Son, and we must come in faith believing that He alone can fill all our needs . . . Satisfy every craving of the heart. He knows the limitations of every mind—that none of us are capable of making our wants known in properly worded petitions.

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What an inestimable blessing is this, that God's mercy endureth forever and forever . . . That He does not turn from us or cast us off? We are dependent upon Him for even the air we breathe! How many of us have ever acknowledged this blessing, or given it a passing thought?

There will come a time, when the night is passed, and the glad light of eternity breaks upon our wondering vision . . . When we shall look upon the face of our Father and know as we are known. Then shall we realize the full value of prayer—its true meaning.

Be not weary in well doing, Yea be not weary in prayer!

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XIII

THE AGED

"A MAN is as old as he thinks he is" is a truism oft-times spoken. With every person it ought to be the highest effort to keep the heart young. The old age of the heart and the old age of the mind are the only old ages to be feared and guarded against, and ought never to be allowed to trespass upon us. Kindness and consideration in all circumstances of life—with unbounded hope and faith—with gentleness toward all mankind, are as armors and shields against them.

Each person can nourish a lifelong youth. . . . A man may come down to the close of life gracefully. Don't be a grouch! Don't strike the heels. In the degree in which we remain youthful in thought and interest, in that proportion we remain young in body. . . . Do not sit with folded hands, watching and criticizing others at their tasks. Do something! Every one is better for indulging a hobby. Many a life has been prolonged and helped by collecting postage stamps, autographs, and in the study of beetles, and botany, etc.

Keep the mind healthy. . . . A sound mind makes a sound body. We each possess qualities which, if nourished and watered with love from the spring of human kindness, will attract to us those who will cheer and brighten declining years. There need be for any one aught except old age as it is numbered in years.

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So few people seem to appreciate the fact that the little things of life—the trifles to which we give such slight heed, are the great things after all. . . . They are the things that make up the sum total of life. It is the acts of kindness and love that endear us to our friends. Those are the things that brighten home. Those are the helpful things that can be performed so unobtrusively as to be scarcely noticed at the time, but are so lasting in their effects and results.

We have only to breathe out the inner life in some act of gentleness and kindness. . . . A word of praise, judiciously bestowed, has helped many a fellow-man in a season of despondency and made his efforts a success—his labor a triumph.

We may carry into our daily life—no matter how many years we have numbered, or what our sphere—the comprehension that the most unimportant act, or expression, if accompanied with kindness and gentleness, may be pregnant with deepest meaning, and is quite apt to be like "Bread cast upon the water," that will call out the same spirit in others, and return in manifold blessings unto ourselves.

A man keeps deep in his heart ineffaceable record of every vital event. . . . If we have come to know the true meaning of life, there will be no brooding over the past—no grieving. We shall have learned this fact, that the trials we have met, the losses we have suffered, and the obstacles we have been called to surmount, have all been necessary to the formation and the upbuilding of character.

The tempest that sweeps the forest—uproots the dead trees—tears off the decayed branches, permitting the sapling to attain, in growth, a perfect symmetry

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and beauty. Thus whatsoever has been sent us of trial and sorrow ought to have chastened us and filled our heart with that sympathy for others—for we shall have come to understand that "To err is human," and men are influenced by their surroundings and conditions.

In our generosity we shall make due allowance for heredity . . . believing it is impossible for all men to be honest. There are those who cannot tell the truth —those who cannot be generous—those who have no courage, as well as those who are incapable of committing certain crimes . . . while there are still others deficient in certain virtues.

We are told one of the signs of old age is loneliness. There need be no reason—no excuse for loneliness. . . . Memory ought to be a golden treasury from which to draw freely—especially to those who have enjoyed the privilege of travel. One ought to be able to recall at will scenes and objects of many lands.

How out from the mists of the past will smile faces—the greetings of voices, of those whose paths touched our own, in our journeyings, and then took their way into the world again. . . . Ah! was not this an investment that yields marvelous returns? How the hours are filled! There can be no loneliness.

Old age has its lessons as well to learn. One of these are to mind their own affairs, and not meddle with those of others. . . . A disposition to meddle—to offer advice unasked, appears to be one of the weaknesses with which many of the aged are afflicted. Simply because the affairs are those of our children is no reason why we should "nose" into their business, unless desired. This persisted in cannot fail to render one

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more or less a nuisance, and there is danger of becoming obnoxious.

Some of the plainest aged persons we have met have possessed such gentle natures. . . . The fruits of the years as they have passed, have ripened and mellowed and brought out all that is sweetest in their nature, as to render them altogether lovable.

Smiles have opened more closed doors—made possible more things, than ever gold has accomplished, more willing, helpful deeds, more gratitude and affection, than the most perfect service of a paid menial. What can be more beautiful than the tender smile that illumes and transforms a wrinkled face of an aged person?

Can there be a greater heroism than a defeated soul striving to arise from the ashes of defeat and despair—endeavoring to rebuild a new edifice of hope, faith and love—reaching upward for the light?

Is it not equally as great for an aged person, who sits alone with his loneliness—his memories . . . Whose life is all behind him—who in tranquillity of soul can pause, receiving gratefully the sweets of life that remain and are presented in the silently, oncoming days that bring the sunset hour, when to his waiting soul shall come, with clarion clearness, that silent call unheard by kindred and friend. . . .

Who as he sits alone, can calmly review the years that have gone—dwelling upon some tender memory—a joysome hour of happiness lived to the full. The sorrows, the trials, the afflictions that were so heavy to be borne—until he had learned to thank Almighty God, even for the crosses. . . . Until he could smile at pain and loss.

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Ah, how short the years have been—how fleet the past—how swift—how many the changes!

Is it not heroism, when one sits alone with his memories of the banished years. . . . Within his soul an infinite yearning for the touch of some remembered hand that was so soothing—so precious in the long ago. . . . For a single word of endearment—the remembered lovelight in a dear one's eye! Then comes the realization that all this has gone from the earth side. The ashes cover everything. . . . Then from despair to arise to resolution. "Nay, this shall not defeat me! I will arise triumphant! I will give the world of my best—the truths—the lessons gleaned from a thousand experiences. Men may not heed me now—I shall profit little by this supreme effort. . . . When I shall have paid the penalty of greatness, by passing out, then my effort may be a heritage treasured by the world."

Thus rising from the ashes of despair—build bit by bit, with the riches of a mighty hope, a structure of truth and helpfulness from that which memory hath retained. . . . That shall be a help—a consolation—an incentive to those who are to come after, for greater endeavor—higher achievement. Thus many of the truths that have come down to us through the ages have arisen from grief, transmuted to full understanding—then given freely to the struggling, groping ones of earth.

In a Liverpool, England, art gallery, there is a picture by Holman Hunt, entitled "Eventide." It represents the interior of a home for the aged. In the foreground is seated the figure of a gray-haired woman, her worn, frail hands folded and resting upon the Bible she has been reading. . . . The light has grown too

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dim for her fading sight. The book rests upon her knee, while she is dreaming in the gloaming. Perchance of the joys of some yester-year, but far more likely of the joys of a glad morning so near at hand, with its blest reunions of loved ones whom she has—

"Loved long since and lost a while."

One can almost read her thoughts. . . . In her face is that look of Sainthood, and unfeigned resignation. Gray she is, with the ashes of a great remembrance! In the placid face is written the record of a peaceful life, untouched by greed, envy, selfishness, or a shirking of duty. . . .

One who bore well her part in the world's work, yet in her frailty was crowded to the wall. There is no resentment, no animosity written in that sweet face. Although plain and wrinkled it is, it appeals to the heart of all beholders, drawing with its unseen power, until hidden chords are set vibrating, and desire for higher ideals are awakened.

A placid face is not one without wrinkles, for the great events of life, joy, sorrow and contentment leave their impress upon heart and face, for the true index of the heart is the face, and life's record there is faithfully and indelibly stamped.

The look of patience, tenderness and resignation in those eyes was not gained by eyes that looked only upon the frivolities of life, or that gloated over the coarser brutalities of the world. . . . But by contemplating the unseen beauties—the hidden glories that Jehovah reveals to the soul.

Pity, love, and mercy are the most pleasing of records God stamps upon the heart and the countenance. . . . The soul looking forth through its windows, the eyes.

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Ought not old age bring one gracefully to the close of life? Like some full-rigged vessel, dropping her anchor in a sheltered harbor at sunset hour. Furling her white sails one by one. Remembering no more the stress of mighty storms weathered, or of shoals overpassed.

Can there be sight more pitiful than a sinister look upon the face of an aged person, a look of cunning, or the hardened look of the avaricious—the grouch? A person soured by the world he has endeavored to overreach, but was worsted in the game, and now is tolerated by those about him only because he is the possessor of the filthy lucre.

I am not a stickler for the "Goody, Goody," but for the gentle, the noble, the upright. God grant those qualities may be written in our face when we, too, shall rest at eventide.

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XIV

REMEMBRANCE

A HERMIT thrush, singing its vesper song among the elm branches, overshading the thatch that covers my little sanctum beneath the rafters, hath drowned all the baser sounds that stole up to my lofty eyrie through the deepening dusk. . . . The notes of the glorious anthem has set into motion the vibrations of remembrance—and upon the wings of song my spirit is borne far overseas, to an ancient beechen wood, that I knew and loved a half century ago.

For years this memory has not recurred to me. . . . Now again I am lying cradled in a moss-filled hollow among the gnarled roots, that sunken deep among the rocks and soil, have taken such tenacious hold. . . . Deriving sustenance therefrom.

In the depth of the forest, the dreaming shadows were wrapped in silence most profound. . . . Soft, sun harmonies filled the glades—touching the lichens upon the silver-gray boles—lighting the anemones at their base . . . Bringing warmth and comfort to the idle fellow reclining in the sunshine. . . . Who drank in the melody of bell-like notes from a hidden brook giving out its tones of gathered gladness as it threaded its course through a moss-grown, pebble-paved runlet in the hollow.

The sights, the sounds in the summer wood, steeped the senses of the idle dreamer. . . . When a hermit thrush, hidden among the spreading branches, began

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trilling its mellow notes to its nesting mate—there was a drifting into slumber too profound for dreaming. . . . Nor awakened he until the shades of twilight were falling, and the halooing of fresh, young voices echoed through the woodland. . . . Then as he sat up somewhat dazed, he was lifted by the peasant lads to their shoulders and borne in triumph, though protestingly, down through the hamlet amid great mirth, and was released only when set in the midst of the oleanders and generaniums that filled the court of the ancient inn.

By twos and threes the sweethearts of the merry lads strolled into the court. . . . Then a feast was prepared, with fruits, and the yield of a rare, old vintage of many years previous. Until late into the night there was merrymaking, with chatter and laughter, and a blending of happy voices in the delightful airs of folklore songs of that storied land.

Ah, hermit thrush! What hast thou done with thy vesper singing? In this awakened memory is blent joy, regret, and longings infinite—for life can never again know such carefree hours.

Memory has ever been spoken of as a "treasure house." It might also be likened to a book of remembrance. More wonderful than all the written works is this book of remembrance. The pure white pages . . . The mystic sensitiveness of the soul, constantly the mind with a transcendent resume of human knowledge that is abiding. . . . Whatever is written there is a minute record of the experiences of life.

The things written there can never be effaced. . . . They may lie dormant for years—yet oft times the slightest thing will awaken them to life . . . repro-

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ducing them as perfect as when imprinted upon the sensitized plate.

Oft times the pages are so boldly engraved as to be constantly recalled. . . . Sometimes the impressions are so slight as to be scarcely legible—but the impress of the message is there—for nothing written in the book of remembrance can ever be lost. Memory binds together the pages of our days, forming a perfect continuity of life.

Memory furnishes us rare settings for treasured experiences we have known. . . . It points the way and encourages us as we face untried experiences, and seasons of great perplexities . . . Makes friendships enduring, and garners the true riches of life, and treasures them beyond the fear of despoilation or loss.

If in this book of remembrance the accounts of life are so faithfully kept. . . and as from it we are to be judged eventually . . . for we are writing therein every moment of time . . . Ought we not constantly bear in mind this fact, that our every deed and desire —every thought and word, is irrevocably engraved therein, and order our lives accordingly? To give thought—to question each act . . . How will this appear when I must meet it in the book of remembrance, in that day of days?

Would it not be well, if in our busy life we would frequently halt for a season, and recall the pleasing memories, that like rare gems fill the pages of this wonderful book of remembrance? It must certainly banish all pessimistic ideas . . . Filling one with a sense of the beauty of life—a broader humanity—a leniency for the failings of others . . . A pity for the shams—the false glitter—the things that lure—the

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pleasures so fleeting—the riches of the world that are as Dead Sea fruit to the touch, and so only dross after all.

It would recall seasons and events that were well worth the living . . . Those gems so safely garnered into the treasury of the memory . . . Those things that nearest touched the soul and lifted it above all ordinary surroundings.

It would show us how the tender hand of the Almighty has ever led us by paths of safety and peace into tranquil havens . . . That God and His love, and our reverence for Him have been the only things worth while. There they all are, engraven in the book of remembrance.

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XV

SIMPLE THINGS

IN my garden there are growing those homeliest of all homely, old-fashioned flowers, the Bouncing Bets (*samponaria officinalis*), and what a time I have in protecting those plants! The gardener and everyone about the premises seem to consider it their duty to exterminate them, simply because they flourish by the roadside, in pastures and along rocky hillsides, and so come under the ban of weeds.

For me they possess associations that no other blossoms have! They are associated with my earliest recollections! They grew in a neglected corner in the old garden at home.

That day in the Rhone Valley, notwithstanding the little party of strangers with whom I was doing the Alps in Switzerland, had shown me the utmost kindness, yet there are seasons when we long for our own, so all this day I had experienced this strangeness, this semi-homesickness which never entirely leaves one who is traveling by himself in foreign lands. "I am going across to the Rhone!" I said, and started on my three-mile tramp across the vale to where the Rhone flowed at the base of the mountain range.

Twilight was falling when I reached the stream. As I turned for the homeward walk, from afar in the mountain peaks came the faint tinkle of bells from kine in those lofty pastures. Instantly mountain and vale were blotted out, and a child again in the gloaming I was sitting on the low, old doorstep at home, when

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the far, faint tinkle of bells from the clearing waked that nameless something in the soul like some sacred sorrow, of which I have since learned the meaning.

This was the last straw to the surcharged heart! Just then it chanced I stepped into a mass of blooming, bouncing bets; instantly I was down among them, my face pressed among their pearly blooms.

Another memory! A season of unrest during that long sojourn in Venice, where one hungers, among all that ancient glory, for sight of green fields and waving trees! Crossing the Lagoon to Fucima, I took the tram to Ill Contente, then started to walk back along the sunlit road which led among the homes and vineyards of the Italian peasants. The heaviness of heart did not leave me until I discovered, peeping through the hedge bordering the way, a spray of pearly blossoms. Instantly I seized upon those bouncing bets, nor heeded I the jibes and smiles of those peasants, as they wondered whatever one could want with those homely weeds, when there were such glorious roses to be had for a few soldi.

Still another season! It was at Rayaac, in the shadow of the Lebanon mountains, where we halted for luncheon while we awaited the train to Baalbek. That day among the floral decorations that adorned the tables was a spray of bouncing bets. I begged this spray of the proprietor and carried it with me to Baalbek. There, in a glass of water, it occupied the window sill in my room. Ever as I lifted my eyes to that marvelous, purple range, with the snows upon their summit, the vision at the same time included those homely, pearl-hued blooms. There they were as I closed the door of that room to continue the journey. Thus the

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two are closely associated in memory with the comfort they brought me. Can one wonder I love them?

Thus it is! Ofttimes with the simplest things God comforts the heart! It was the simple things the Blessed Master employed to teach the great lessons! The grass, the lilies of the field, a piece of silver, a lighted candle, the sparrow, the seeds that fell by the wayside, the tares in the wheat, the laborers in the vineyard, thus enabling the simplest mind to grasp the mighty truths!

It is the little courtesies of life, the simple acts of loving kindness that endears our friends to us. A silent handclasp has brought more comfort to sorrowing hearts than loftiest eulogy or floral tribute.

A little deed quietly performed hath brought its reward a thousand fold. Thus it is with the simple duties of life, we refine and ennoble every task in the spirit in which it is performed. It is the aim in every act that consecrates it. It may be the simple duties that God requires of us, if well performed, that will lead us to great heights and clearer vision.

The simple songs our mother sang in the twilight, to us as children, are remembered with keener pleasure than the great Oratorios to which we have since listened. A single, simple flower sent me by some thoughtful friend has given me greater pleasure than the gift of diamonds.

All about us are hearts hungering for the simplest word of kindness and cheer. Let us not fail in this opportunity to speak them. A simple word has followed me all my life; that has done more for me in character building than all the eloquent sermons to which I have listened.

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Memory brings a plain, old farmhouse in the clearing, a tiny white-washed room beneath the eaves, a cot and a carpetless floor, a little deal shelf on which was a few old books, some specimens from field and woods. I think with regret how pitifully few they were, but they were my treasures, my only possessions. Ofttimes I would light my little lamp and steal a few moments from needed rest to enjoy those treasures.

The room boasted one window of tiny panes of glass. One day mother made for me a curtain of unbleached cotton and hung it there as a surprise. I found it as I sought my couch that night. O joy of joys! Now was I rich indeed. Life has never since held as keen a delight for me!

Today the floors of my little sanctum beneath rafter and thatch are covered with Oriental rugs; its walls are hung with beautiful pictures; the place is littered with costly and rare bric-a-brac and souvenirs of travel. How gladly would I exchange any one of these for that little unbleached curtain and the great happiness it brought.

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XVI

BESIDE THE EMBERS

"A SOLITARY figure sitting beside its fire." Does not this sentence impress one with a sense of unutterable loneliness—inexpressible sadness? One could readily imagine the silence of a deserted habitation, where the winter twilight is deepening—blotting out the nooks and corners—rendering the objects of the old room shadowy and indistinct. The only animate object is the bent figure of an aged man, the most pathetic of all figures, cowering above the feeble blaze of his expiring hearth fire, the flickering flames casting grotesque shadows of his bent form upon ceiling and walls.

It is a motionless figure, for the faded eyes are gazing into the embers, seeing again the forms and faces of those who were wont to gather here within the glow of the inglenook. . . . The smiling, rosy faces of happy, romping youngsters, who grew into manhood and womanhood, who one by one answered the call of the great world, passed out through the olden portal, seeking their fortune, or homes of their own. . . . The world has claimed them, there present whereabouts perhaps to him unknown. Then there came a more imperative call, and one who had been the joy and pride of his princely manhood . . . Who side by side with him had walked the rugged way of life, brightening and cheering each step until its descent neared the sunset hour, answered this call, laying aside the burdens, passing into the silence, leaving him bereft indeed. Kind hands had prepared her a resting place beneath a canopy of

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roses and myrtle, and now he waits alone beside the dying embers.

This is quite apt to be our first impression, filling one with pity infinite. Yet it may also be one of perfect content and restfulness.

Let us see! A solitary figure. The embers those of a smouldering campfire, within the forest depths, o'ercanopied with the odorous boughs of balsam and pine, towering far above. There comes the faint sighing of zephyrs among the branches—a tinkle of dew, the soft flutter of dropping needles. Or mayhap about one the yearning of an autumn night, with a tang in the air, premonition of the still, white days so soon to appear . . . Which only enhances the joy of the swiftly-passing season.

Through the solemn hush of the night-hid woods comes stealing softly the faint bell-like tones of a stream, subdued by distance. This stream that was so boisterous, so turbulent, when all the afternoon, with fly and rod, one waded its foam-flecked waters, intent on its wary fishes. So soothing this hymn of evening shadows—so tranquilizing—so subtle its melody as to be scarcely perceptible, through the reverie, as one lives over again the keen delights of that golden afternoon, so quickly passed, yet forever more a link in one's chain of gold.

Thus one sits beside the dying embers, so completely wrapped in reflections, one does not heed the gentle stirring of the mosses, or note the points of light, that are eyes of tiny creatures . . . Those furry denizens of the forest, that have stolen from their safe retreats to investigate this silent, immovable something that seems to dominate the woods.

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Great scintillating orbs peer through each aperture of balsam breathing branches, as if wondering at this mortal sitting so solitary beside the dying embers . . . Wrapt and immovable as one who worships within the inner shrine. Yet all undisturbed they wheel onward through the mighty spaces of the field of night, marking their track with trace of silver light.

Ah, this is rest indeed, in the all-embracing peace of the night! Hours since, companions and guides, wearied with the day's sports, sought their couches of evergreen boughs, and wrapping their blankets about them, lay down to healthful slumbers.

One is alone with the night, and carefree. All the things that fret and worry have been left behind in the closed office, counting house, or shop. One did not realize how weary, how over-burdened one had become, nor how cramped the soul. Now in this restful silence of the night—all dissonance stilled—or merged into the eternal harmony, one can feel the soul expand its wings. Through the great hush there steals a subtle sense as the soul's outreaching for that unseen presence that pervades the universe, which is so rarely sensed in the hurry and tumult of everyday life.

As this immensity sinks into the soul with its soothing uplift, the embers are covered with gray ashes, only from one tiny spark a film of smoke ascends a spiral, straight towards the zenith, as if a signal to the eternal spirit of the pines, whose resinous odors—like a healing balm, lades the night air as it comes from the deep-breathing of forest aisles, whose mysterious depths seem to hold the messsge of the ages. Still one sits there lost in contemplation of the Infinite, and the mystery of existence.

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XVII

MOTHER

HAVE we ever taken into consideration this fact, that the most precious gift the Almighty has bestowed upon the children of men, next to that of His only Son, has been mother? In that one word centers all that is tender, lovable, chaste, flawless. The depth of sincerity, devotion, abnegation, unfaltering faith and strength beyond comprehension.

Our friends may forsake us, fortune fail us, everything except a mother's love; that abideth ever a flame that burneth ever steadily, undimmed through years of separation, affliction, and trial.

No matter how far we may wander upon this broad earth, ofttimes forgetting home in the rush and worry, in our struggle for daily bread and to maintain our foothold among the pushing, struggling mass of humanity, that would force us from our position and trample on our rights.

Our letters home may have grown few and far between, but a mother's love has constantly bridged the chasm with loving thoughts, trust and prayer for the absent boy—her absent girl.

"I want my mother!" is the heart cry of many a man and woman whose hair is gray. The dust of that mother has mingled with the churchyard mould years on years ago. "I want to tell her all my sorrows, my mistakes, my failures, as I told her my little troubles when a child."

"I want to feel her arms about me as of old and hear

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her tender words, 'Don't mind it, dear, have courage, be patient and brave.' "

"I want my mother! I want to tell her how wealth, honors, position, worldly friends have but proved as ashes of the Dead Sea fruit. How the laurels have withered. The honeyed words of praise have become meaningless. Mother will know! Mother will understand."

"I want my mother now," said a white-haired man to me, "more than I did when a child. "Her words of approval, her words of encouragement, would mean more to me than the applause of the populace. Oft-times incidents transpire when I feel I must tell mother of this, and then the fact is borne in unto me that mother has entered into the silence of the dreamless rest."

Entered into the silence? Ah, me! Still is that a reason that her love has failed us? Or is lost to us? Nay! A mother's love is immortal. Death cannot quench it! It is a flame that will burn undimmed through all eternity.

Is it not a precious thought that mother is watching over us as she did when we were infants in our cribs? What if the years be long, let us serve until life's close, with patience and trust. Mother will be waiting for us, and Death will give her back her babe again.

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XVIII

FITNESS

TO attain the height of perfection, and to be truly effective, a thing must combine the two elements . . . perfect harmony—absolute flawlessness. One false note would mar the loftiest oratorio, the sublimest anthem. A chapel service conducted in a medieval sanctuary would seem strangely out of place, the same as vaudeville in one of our stylish churches, or frivolity in the Garden of Gethsemane.

There is an awesomeness to a majestic cathedral. . . . The vastness—the perfect proportions—the subdued lights falling through richly-stained glass of its windows—the jeweled altars, with lighted tapers—the incense and flowers. To accord with all this, there must be appropriateness in the mode of worship. The music must be exalted, the ritual flawless, the service stately, the priest dignified and the vestments of costliest material. The voice intoning the service must be sympathetic, subdued. Lights toned to softness—noiseless footfalls—voices hushed to faintest whispers—restlessness calmed into perfect repose. In the soul that sense of all-pervading peace, as in the presence of the Infinite.

In our everyday life uprightness, gentleness, compassion and charity should mark every act in our dealings with our fellow-man. A Christian character is tarnished—worthless—without these assets. The symmetry and beauty of a forest tree, or shrub, is marred if there be upon it dead and decaying branches. . . .

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Thus the deportment of a church member must comport well with his profession. A Christian ought not frequent resorts of shady repute—his business methods should be beyond reproach.

Children should revere their parents. Deference accorded the aged. Well-bred persons will prove themselves gentlemen or ladies (as the case may be) under all circumstances—upon all occasions.

Artists and poets should avoid all eccentricities, in manner and dress. Why affect such characteristics as long hair, flowing collars and flaming ties? Such things attract attention and call forth remarks. A genius may not be just like ordinary mortals, yet that is no reason for accentuating idiosyncrasies.

It needs sunshine and open spaces for the perfect opening of the rose, the lily. While moisture and sheltered places are required for ferns and mosses, and the perfection of the violet, the anemone, the wind flower.

The hemlock standing alone in a clearing soon dies. It requires the comradeship and protection of forest depths; while the heather needs wind-swept moorlands, the mist, the rugged, frowning tor; the little shamrock, the peat, the moisture of the Irish climate. It thrives nowhere else.

To make a perfect day it needs the radiant sunshine and balmy airs, blue skies and gleaming waters, softly-veiled distances, restful vales and congenial companionship. One harsh word or impatient gesture would mar all this. The brightest day would hold a bitter memory.

Each morning, on awakening, salute the day right royally, accept cheerfully whatever the day hath in

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store. Be ready to bravely meet its duties, its trials, its disappointments, so that its close will find you ready for the peace, quiet and rest that comes with the deepening twilight shadows, bringing a sense of duties well performed.

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XIX

A GLORIOUS TRIO

"Lord, have I dallied with the sacred fire,
Lord, have I trailed Thy glory in the mire?"
Robert W. Service

"WHATEVER is worth doing is worth doing well." It is our duty to improve to the extent of our ability whatever talent the Almighty has bestowed upon us. Wherein we are remiss, in that ratio are we responsible. Talents were given to be improved, and not to be hidden away—not to be treated lightly, or to be trifled with. No man should be satisfied with less than the highest there is within him. . . . Studying to know what talent is his, and when convinced, strive to prove himself worthy of the God-given gift, without shirking, dissatisfaction, or envy when beholding the proficiency attained by another, wishing this talent was ours. The Almighty has endowed us each with that for which we are best constituted, and were we to undertake the work of another, it might mean failure. Better be a good accountant than a poor musician—a good cobbler than a failure as an artist.

Should the gift be that of music, why prostitute it in jazz, and ragtime, or so-called popular compositions, to which the giddy in brothel and dance halls can execute the shimmy, fox trot, bunny hug, and the like? If one is capable of this, why not produce the music for a lullaby— a song or hymn, an anthem, an oratorio? One might not make a success of the first

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attempt. . . . Such heights are not always reached at a single bound. The ladder of harmony is built note by note, until the highest effort is crowned by achievement, and the world is enriched with a heritage that is priceless.

Methinks music is the greatest of all gifts. To rightly interpret the words, the thoughts, and the inner feelings of the poet, and express it intelligently in some musical composition that the world may grasp and comprehend the sublime emotions of the poet is indeed a marvelous talent. Music hath its dwelling place within the soul, and where words end, there music begins. Therefore the musician must be a poet as well, and yet musical compositions are wordless songs that could not be rendered clearer by any articulation of speech, for all the loftier thoughts, the deeper emotions, are too sacred for words, and can be expressed only by the heavenly means of music, which fills and thrills the soul as nothing else can. The heart must be rightly attuned to receive the subtle impressions that the ear may catch the flawless harmony of infinite spaces.

Can anything be more sublime than the music of some flawless symphony filling nave and transept—soaring to lofty dome—echoing and dying away among the arches of some stately cathedral, while it leads the soul of some humble worshipper into the awful presence of the Divine Spirit?

Consecrated music is one of the forms of art. . . . The gift divine that tends to bring us back—to bind us in this age of dimmed spiritual vision, to the mystical faith which the church is trying to reveal—to teach through her creeds and ritual to the wavering soul of

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mankind. Then is it not something to have fulfilled, even if falteringly, the design of the Almighty.

Can anything be more satisfying to the soul than to be the composer of some melody that contented mothers will employ to sing their innocent babes into peaceful slumber? Or some little company of faithful believers, conducting their service of song in some humble chapel, or some tiny white church in the quiet vale, while twilight shadows are deepening, filling the place with a peace indescribable. . . . Such music as the radio will carry to listening millions around the earth.

Music and Poetry, twin sisters of the soul, that ever side by side go hand in hand; for like the composer, the true poet draws his inspiration from objects about him. It is indeed a great gift to be able to express the emotions of the heart in lofty phraseology. . . . In sentences of perfect meter, rhyme and rhythm. Phrases that are uplifting, soothing, helpful, that can bring comfort and healing upon the wings of song.

A being endowed with this heavenly gift of posy lives a life apart. . . . Within the inner sanctuary of the soul, where none may intrude. Where every hour songs are ringing, loftier, sweeter than have ever been written.

The sweetest songs are those that have never been sung. The grandest poems are those that have never been written. They are lost to the world, through carelessness, or the lack of alertness on the part of those to whom they were revealed. . . . That is one of the reasons why so many gems of thought, of such marvelous brilliancy, that flash upon us are lost. An instant they are ours, then like breath misting the steel, appearing for the briefest space, then disappearing

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forever. A wise poet will grasp them instantly. . . . Should he fail to transfix them upon paper, they never come again, but as shadows they rove the soul, growing more and more vague as the years advance. They may never entirely leave us, but become a memory as of some irredeemable sweetness passed beyond recall.

There are songs that follow day after day—that clamor to be written down, that would require the pen of an angel to bring out all their charm, and yet when expressed in poetical form, and given to the world, are music-pinioned and of wondrous sweetness.

The true poet, it matters not how illiterate he may be, let him try to express his true sentiments—the sense of beautiful scenes, or things about him, or the glorious visions of his soul, at once his words take on a loftier strain.

The ability to express in fitting phrases those soul visions must be given from on high. The sources of song are many. Joy and love—woe and heartache, as well as loneliness and longing. Methinks every soul, in some degree, possesses the elements of posy, and ever even through the lives of the lowly songs are rippling that never find expression in words. Songs unsung. . . . Songs that die unheard.

Not all who sing are poets. All songs do not possess true merit; they are mere jingles, without rhyme or reason. . . . So called machine poetry, where the would-be poet expresses no sentiment, having none to express. I dare say there is not anything written but can find its way into print, for many things that are classed as verse are not poetry. The true gift of poetry is born with us. . . . Still, education and practice, with perseverance, will make of almost any person a versifier.

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If there are thousands of verses written that are not poems, there are also thousands of poems that have never been put into verse form. The loftiest ideas, the most beautiful phrasings have never been set to meter or rhyme.

The true poet is seldom satisfied with what he produces. Only a pure heart, a flawless soul can adequately set forth the wonderful ideas that come, so fleeting, so illusive, yet flitting through the soul and brain, intangible and haunting forevermore.

Closely allied to those two, Music and Poetry, is Art, forming a glorious trio. . . . Enriching the world with things that please the eye—gladden the heart, and brighten the home. "Art is beauty passed through thought and fixed in form." Art covers an extensive field, including that of painting, which is considered the greatest, the most difficult of all arts, a discussion of which there is not space in this present article. One of the evidences of refinement is good pictures. Frequently people's tastes are judged by the pictures in their homes.

Like the musician and poet, artists are born. One may be able to master technic—learn the mixing of colors, but he, too, must have implanted within him that divine spark—that love for the beautiful—that soul vision like the musician and poet, a ready perception, that can see the beauty and possibilities of a picture in things about him. Many artists can detect pictures in a mould spot upon the wall. The true artist can see the finished picture upon the canvas, even before the first pencil touch upon it.

Upon the easel before me stands an unfinished picture on which I am working. It is an ideal! How

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many who look upon it will realize that in its production have gone all my best effort, aspiration, my very heart's blood.

That I have experienced rapture and despair, as I have endeavored to produce in the finished picture that which my mind's eye saw so perfectly upon the virgin canvas.

Can they realize how each brush was dipped in the rose hue of hope? How the breath was held in silent prayer as at each stroke of the brush the creation, like an imprisoned spirit awoke and expanded, growing more and more toward the ideal.

Then by some slight mishap, a wrong stroke of the brush, some misporportion in the mixture of pigments, a false note of color, and its beauty was marred, and only by supreme effort was its harmony restored. Thus it will proceed until its completion, and then, alas, how far beneath the ideal!

Who, then, will be competent to correctly judge this picture? No person should presume to aspire to the position as an art critic who has never created a picture, who has never mastered its technic. Not as a copyist, for no true artist would demean himself by deliberately copying that which another has evolved from his brain by earnest effort.

This is the reason why it is so hard for the true artist to commercialize his work, for each picture must seem a portion of his being. It can be only a dire necessity that will force a true artist to produce commercial work, furnishing so many copies of the one picture per day. This can scarcely be considered art. If so, it is mediocre in the extreme.

Artists are not made! This is a truism. The divine

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spark must be instilled into the soul at birth. Speak of correspondence schools! Try the mixing of pigments by formulas as set forth in text-books, and see what the effect will be.

The true artist works in the true sense, for he produces his work, in a measure, from his soul, though in many cases he does it unconsciously. He loves his art and pursues it enthusiastically. The thought of drudgery never enters his mind, but experiences a constant delight as his certain creation grows beneath his master strokes, and a pleasure grows with it.

There must be that love for this work that amounts almost to a passion, that all else becomes a secondary nature, or sinks into insignificance beside it. Sacrifice everything to art. Let no amount of time or patience, or effort, be too great to accomplish the desire of the heart. Strive to make even the humblest effort a masterpiece, and reap the reward of a consciousness of work well done.

To every true artist there comes regret that his productions must remain so far beneath his ideal that he falls so far short in his effort to produce with crude pigments, taken from the soil, that effect which the Master Artist, by his slightest wish, hangs every morning in the east, or floods the western sky at sunset hour —the marvelous draperies he hangs along the hills, the pictures He spreads before us in sunlit vales and gleaming waters.

I know of no other occupation that brings as keen pleasure or a success that will so humble a soul as he realizes his dependences upon a higher power, who hath implanted in his soul this lofty gift, a talent to produce that which may become a heritage and give pleasure to

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generations yet unborn. For who can know how much of this work may endure, when even the place of his sepulchre may be forgotten.

"Ah, unless the mighty heart throbs of the painter,
In the ocean of your bosom rise and swell;
You will never feel the rapture of the painter,
You will never know his heaven or taste his hell."

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XX

OUT WITH THE TIDE

AMONG the primitive people who inhabit the Soloman Islands, somewhere in the Indian Archipeligo, a people who have no written language, a beautiful custom prevails. On the death of one of their number a light skiff is fashioned. The body when it is prepared for burial is placed in the frail craft, and then set adrift. The friendly waters take it to their embrace and carry it out to sea. The blessed angles who watch over it only know its fate.

One can imagine the mother, in her anguish, as she bends above her babe and wreathes in blossoms the tiny craft, so frail, to withstand the bufferings of storm and wave, kissing her babe a long, last farewell. It matters not the color, the heart is the same, in which the Almighty has implanted filial affection and devotion. The heart speaks when the lips are dumb. Thus she sends it forth trusting in her idol, the god she worships, for its safety and guidance.

Thus it is with the aged. All the hardships overcome, the want and suffering overpassed, with worn hands, folded and empty, setting forth to find a place of rest.

"Going out with the tide" is an expression ofttimes used in connection with our own loved ones when dangerously ill and their recovery doubtful. "They will probably go out with the tide," we say. As at the turning of the tide, vitality usually is at its lowest ebb, and when that hour is passed, hope revives.

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What a beautiful thought—"going out with the tide." A setting of sails and with the silent boatman drifting across the bar to a haven of rest, just across on the farther shore. We have left every burden, every care that marred our earth life, knowing there is reunion with our loved ones who await our coming.

"Going out with the tide." From every little gray sea town that clings along the rugged side of harbors all over the world fisher barques by the thousands set forth with the ebb of the tide. Sight most beautiful when those craft with every sail set glide across the bar, out to the majestic sea.

The hour is sunset. The headlands are smitten in argentum and gold. The wide wonder of the sea, flashing and sparkling as with hidden fires of an opal. A great swirl of sunset-dyed clouds overhead. The sails gleam snowy white against the burnished gold of the spars.

Silently they glide to where the mile-long nets are set, with which they garner the harvest of the deep. All through the night they toil beneath the kindly stars while they look forward to the glorious dawning, the home returning, and the welcome awaiting them.

"Going out with the tide." When the heavens are overcast, when billows a heaving mass, hurling their mighty forces against those bulwarks set by the Almighty, when vessels are straining at their moorings, when there is a protesting cry of the shingles, a moaning at the bar.

Fearlessly they set sail, no matter how wild the waves, how angry the deep, how threatening the heavens. Men must labor! It is given women to do the weeping. Many fisher lads never return, and the

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faithful sea guards well the treasures committed to her trust.

To each of us will come this "Going out with the tide." Whether storm or calm, it will matter little, for it's a staunch craft that will carry us. The boatman at the helm has never failed of a safe landing.

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XXI

A JULY DAY

FLEECY clouds drift lazily through the blue. A day of absolute peace. A day for rest. An enchantment of tranquillity rests over the summer landscape. Hills and far-reaching vales are bathed in a radiance divine. It touches rock and stream, whose banks are edged with nestling blooms. Scented flag and purple fleur-de-lis lift their heads among the bending tassels of silken grasses. Shadows of over-hanging branches sleep upon the bosom of the placid stream, where graceful elms and massing willows lean above the limpid waters. From every thicket and cluster of alders, vines with their dainty tendrils droop in a veil of exquisite intricacy and delicacy, surpassing any effect ever accomplished by the most expert maker of lace.

Let us unleash the boat and drift calmly down the silently flowing stream, letting it bear us where it will, while we, dreaming idly, trail the hand in the cooling waters, watching the flashing jewels that drip from the finger tips, or note the life in the tranquil depths among the pebbles, the gold-brown mosses and the tender green of aquatic plants, among which the darting finny tribe are sporting in shade and shine.

Queenly July, with roses in her hair, smiling over the fields of heading wheat and billowing barley, with its sheen of silver like a sea of glass. Broad meadows slope to the water's edge, always nurtured with murmuring rivulets, always green, with lilies queening it over the massing clover, red and white, with pennyroyal hidden

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among the lush grasses. The prefume-laden breeze, the dewy sheen, the melody. We know and love them all. To us they minister joy and peace, as they lull us to a restful companionship with Nature.

Let us endeavor, just for the day, to put aside the perplexing cares, the greater things of life, and enjoy to the full the peace, the quiet, the beauties which Nature is displaying so lavishly, with the half-forgotten scents and sounds so graciously wooing us.

Ah, we never fully forget, for we carry with us memories of every season enjoyed, of every spot we have visited, of bloom and balm, of song of brook and bird. Those simple delights which we recall with such pleasure. For the scenes we may visit will photograph themselves indelibly upon memory.

How rocks and trees become as old friends. How they grow into the heart. We recall them longingly when far from them. On our every return they seem to welcome us with arm outreaching and umbrageous depths that invite to rest, where every breeze that lightly stirs among the branches is music pinioned with perfect harmony of wind and wood.

Thus every hour of our care-free day will be another jewel added to our treasury of memory, our fund of field and forest lore, for every cove, however tiny, into which our barque may drift will be filled with sweet wild blooms, simple, yet perfect as when they came from the hand of the Creator, with all the daintiness in shading and tints that man in his cultivation has not succeeded in improving upon. What a dainty company they are as they cluster about our stranded boat.

Here they are, a goodly company. Blue flag, Turk's cap lily, cowslip, fringed loosetrife, Quaker ladies,

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Bishop weed, meadow rue, St. John's wort, monkshood, milkweed, jewelweed, spiderwort, closed gentian, and a host of others with whose names we are not familiar. They are smiling their welcome, lifting their dainty faces with every leaf and petal flawless in its perfection. A gentle reminder that whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.

But why this lavish waste? Ah, there can be no waste! All things have their purpose, their use. We may not understand those mysteries of Nature's laboratory, in which the Creator works out His wondrous plans.

Let us leave the tiny craft. Come with me for an exploration of the meadow. See the grasses are knee deep, the timothy tasseling for the haying. The droning of bees is loud among the massing clover and purple-bee balm. Ah, we have bruised the pennyroyal and all the air is rife with balm. Thus with every step we are virtually "shaking out honey, treading perfume."

Up from the tufts of grasses the meadow lark springs and soars away. No need for searching there! The nest is far distant. This is but a ruse to mislead us.

It is the same with the bobolink swinging on yon wild rose spray. There is no nest there! I have never been fortunate enough to discover a bobolink's nest. Never have I known a person who has seen one, still there must be nests.

Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed in such gorgeous apparel as those dignified tiger lilies, or those stately black-eyed susans. But why all this lavish waste of gold and royal purple? Because God is not restricted in His gifts to men. No giving, however prodigal, can impoverish Him. Let us enjoy to the full this riot of color and beauty.

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The wide meadow is set with meadow sweet and meadow rue, the delicate lace of the wild parsnip. Over all this billowing sea of beauty and fragrance silken swallows are skimming in their flight.

Here, safe hidden in the shielding grasses, in the depth next to the cool, moist earth, is a myriad life, with tragedies as intense as those of our own, where are loves and hate, tranquility and warfare, and abject fear.

The meadow is rimmed 'round by cool, dim woods, where shadows are dense, and where shy wild things have their homes. Safe hidden they peer at us intruders of their especial domain.

Here in their flawless beauty are sylvan glades dappled with the sunshine that filters through the interlacing branches, weaving graceful patterns across the tender mosses starred with king-cups, adder tongues, and dog tooth violets.

Now nears the hour of noon and there is silence through the summer woods. The very light is dreaming. The soul drinks in the calm as we loiter through cool, dim ways that yield their healing to troubled brain and tired hands.

Sunset, and we turn regretfully riverward and again we float gently upon the placid stream, in a companionship of silence. Words have no place in the satisfying perfection of Nature. For the charms which the hours of declining day assume fills the soul with an appreciation and an ecstasy words cannot adequately express.

Let us set the white sail and under the freshening breeze speed homeward, leaving all this peace and beauty. But to our life has been added one more stanza written in characters of living light.

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XXII

A DESERTED HABITATION

TURNING off from the main traveled highway we entered a country lane and followed a broken cart track, bordered with spreading maples and thickets of wild cherry that led us to where at its end was a weather-silvered olden farmhouse, deserted, windowless, and with doors that swung with every passing breeze. Outer buildings with sagging roofs, and fallen siding stood open to the weather, as well as to the golden sunshine and the fragrant airs of heaven.

An old, deserted house has ever held for me a fascination, equaled only by some ruined medieval castle, or some stately cathedral in lands across the sea; and so this day I quietly slipped away from my friends and entered by that olden portal, a portal of yesterday, and wandered through the empty, deserted rooms—parlor, living-room, and kitchen. Then climbed the rickety stairway to the low, sloping rooms beneath the rafters, where the trundlebeds used to be where the children slept.

Fallen lime littered the floor—mildewed paper hung in shreds. Here I found a half-worn baby's shoe, and I thought of that tiny foot, perhaps grown to larger size, which was out in the wide world treading the steep rugged pathway of life.

Then my mind reverted to that time when the house was newly built, whose completion was looked forward to with so much anxiety, and the pair, newly wed, like nesting birds, moved in and set up housekeeping, and

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life was so strange and new, and joy and gladness filled the home. How the newly-mated pair planted the orchard and maples about the home. They dug the garden, planned the arrangement of the beds, planted rows of herbs, mint, and rue, tansy, summer savory, thyme, and sweet marjoram; traces of them still remain in scattered bits growing among the weeds. Then the young wife must have roses and sweetbriar under the windows. Phlox and Sweet Williams and many old-fashioned flowers along the walks, with lilacs and snowballs about the gate.

Then the children came. Happy, shouting youngsters they were; but how quickly they grow from us! Then they took their outward flight, making homes of their own, and left the old home, oh so lonely. Then one day a visitor came, an uninvited guest, but the children all came back, and they folded the worn hands of the patient mother, and bore her out along the bordered way, beneath the purple lilacs at the gate, up along the green lane they went, and laid her to rest beneath the evergreens, just beside the lane and only a few roods from the olden home, and planted myrtle there.

Ah, that was years ago, for the graves are overgrown with a wild tangle of roses and brambles, and the leaning stones that mark the graves, for the two rest side by side, have weeping willows and clasped hands engraved thereon; these with stanzas are nearly obliterated on the rain-washed slabs.

Then the lonely old man went back to the lonelier home and took up the burden of life, which henceforth he must bear alone, and so the years went by. But one day he, too, answered the call and lay with idle hands

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beneath the south window, for years ago, people had a superstition that the sun in passing must not cross a corpse, neither must it cross a grave, but all must lie with feet to the east, so as to arise in the resurrection morn facing the sunrise.

Through the slats nailed across the casings of the window the breath of roses stole softly, sweetly in. Friends and kindly neighbors came and went. There were watchers at night beside the bier. Little groups stood about the door, and spoke kindly of him who was gone. "Let's see," some one asked, "How many years has Amanda been dead?"

"It must be all of fifteen years," one answered. Another said, "Yes, it's all of that, for our Mary was married that summer and her Margaret will be fourteen her next birthday."

"Poor man, how he must have missed her! He never got over his grieving," they said.

Ah well, they are together now, resting side by side, beneath the myrtle, and the headstones marking their sunken graves lean lovingly to each other.

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XXIII

POSSIBILITIES

IN character building, that has been likened to a weaver at his loom, there requires constant watchfulness, as there are little shuttles of evil that are apt to slip in and mar the perfection and beauty of the design. There are quite apt to be bungles—knotted threads and broken ends. . . . The tears that fall we fear perchance may blur the hues in the pattern we are weaving. The bungles—knotted threads and broken ends—appear only upon the earth side, while the reverse, or heavenly side reveals a perfect whole, with a tender tinting from the tears shed.

It is possible to so live in rapport with things sacred as to gain a knowledge of things divine. One needs not necessarily dwell in an attic, or in an aloofness from his fellow-men, but the mind that governs the will must be purged from the baser things that hamper the soul. . . . With plain living, higher ideals, a broad charity, chastity, and uprightness, and all those essentials that make for cleanly living. Those are qualities necessary for a clearer vision. One may mingle with men—conduct a daily business, and yet dwell in a world apart. . . . An inner fastness of the soul where none may intrude. . . . With a sense of his Maker, too sacred for words. Such things must be experienced —investigated for self. . . . They are difficult to impart to another. A million pointing fingers cannot enable a blind person to behold a sunset.

A steady course—an even tenor, should mark our

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daily life. Turbulent energy never yet brought about desired results. . . . Only with careful application—uncompromising concentration, and persistent effort will crown any undertaking, however stupendous, with success. Coupled with these there must be a faith in one's powers, and hope that is boundless. The failures of many men are largely due to their own doubt in their ability.

It is possible to create a strong personality. There are persons whose entrance into a room is as if another electric bulb had been turned on, or like the glorious stars at night. There are those with whom, for a moment we come in contact in the thronged thoroughfare, and for us the whole day is brighter. Thus it is possible for us to come close to our fellow-man and touch gently whatever of joy or sorrow, success or defeat, may be his.

The radio may be but the stepping stone to more marvelous things to come. I sincerely believe with less strenuous living, keeping the mind healthy with purer thinking, less fretting after things that lure, fewer joy rides, less of dance halls, the movies in moderation, less envy, more of love and a broader charity, we might sit within our own quiet room, and with ears rightly attuned, catch the music of the spheres, or listen to angelic choirs, whose music is constantly about us, but can never become audible to earth-cloyed ears.

To our every effort we must bring the highest within us. Work, life, and love are all one mighty force, leading men to the attainment of their loftier ideals. . . . While desire, enthusiasm, and perseverance may all be concentrated into one definite purpose, for the consummation of that ideal. All about us are the

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things that like thoughts and words may be wrought into beautiful form. Still we are prone to pursue illusions, while we slight things worth while.

Unrealized ideals, spurned opportunities, may be the things we shall regret, and over which we shall grieve when we come to sum up the true meaning of life. It is the shallows that touch the pebbles, and there is ever a muted yet cheery song. Thus it is the little things of life that cheer and bless, and make this life worth the living.

Sometimes our greatest success may hinge on the merest trifles, like baffling symptoms in a case of illness. . . . The very thing we neglected to mention on account of it seemingly unimportance is the key to the difficulty. Thus with our life, we simply turn a corner and our fate awaits us, an opportunity that may never again be presented. It needs a staunch heart to meet unflinchingly the real trials of life and not to be overcome, notwithstanding they may have the appearance of mere trifles.

Life is to all of us like a wanderer in a strange country. One wonders what new scenes and surprises each hour, like the curves in a road, to us may reveal. New tasks—new trials. The dauntless ones will remove their coat, roll up their sleeves, and tackle it two-handed. There is nothing to be gained in trying to go around any task, or in leaving it, thinking tomorrow will do as well. We have just so many tasks to meet in this life. Let us determine to meet them squarely, bravely. This is our opportunity, and the Almighty gives faith and courage for every emergency in life.

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XXIV

CHIPPED FRAGMENTS

SET in the eastern gable, beneath rafter and thatch, is a window of marvelous brilliancy, formed of fragments of glass, chipped to correct proportions, leaded, and by a combination of double windows produces the effect of cut gems, and is the admiration of all beholders.

This window was fashioned to prove the fact that not anything is lost—that nothing is entirely worthless, but might be utilized for utility or beauty.

Every fragment of glass that has gone into the constructing of this window was gathered from the byways, alleys, and refuse piles of public dumps. Fragments of vases, bits of art glass, bottoms of crystal glasses and highly-colored bottles.

First there was a pocketing of pride, the ignoring of that which people might say or think. . . . Then there were long tramps, frequently with meager reward. Then there was a training of the eye, to detect at a glance the things that might be available. Soon it possessed a fascination—there was delight over some exceptionally beautiful fragment, until one can readily understand how it might become an obsession.

After this came the cleansing—the chipping—the careful setting in lead, and when at last it stood complete, and was set in place, it proved a delight. While engaged upon this window, or when set aside in the room, this window represented no more than a mass of dull glass and lead, of no use and devoid of beauty;

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but when set in place, with the glorious rays of the morning sun streaming through it, it was at once transformed to the brilliancy of flashing gems, and in the possession of which one may well rejoice.

In the byways, the slums, the world's public dumps . . . even in the filth of the gutter, are many rare jewels—precious and immortal souls. . . . Gems that the Almighty breathed into the innocent babes as they entered the portal of life. All souls are flawless in their purity, coming from Jehovah . . . That purity is innate. It matters not, if through heredity, environment, or temptation with its overmastering power, the being becomes degraded, besotted, diseased and loathsome, that immortal soul, that jewel, the gift of the Almighty, still lives.

It may have become dwarfed, cramped, enfeebled—its spark of life nearly extinct. . . . Perhaps there has been no hope, no help, no encouragement, for this incompetent wretch, and the soul has shriveled as desire for higher, nobler things has died in the despair of the helpless being. O the boundless, unrestricted pity that should fill the soul at thought of this!

In this case it needs no putting aside of pride. . . . There must be at least a modicum of the Christ spirit. There will be no need to search afar. One can find them everywhere, those broken-spirited, those hopeless and seemingly worthless, chipped fragments of humanity. . . . A travesty of the human being, loathsome in their filth and depravity.

One will need approach them gently, let there be no hint of patronizing or force. No matter how depraved the creature, there is that spirit, innate, that will brook neither. Exhibit only an interested and brotherly

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spirit. When confidence is gained, if possible provide the means of respectability, or, better still, ye who can, and have in your power to furnish employment, and thereby create a spirit of independence. You will have won your man, and set his feet in the path toward honorable citizenship.

What matters it, if one is occasionally deceived? In our efforts we may have implanted a seed that must eventually bear its fruit. Having once enjoyed even a semblance of respectability and independence, no person can ever sink to the same depth again and remain there unconcerned.

Having collected our fragments, the first thing necessary is the cleansing. . . . Then the putting into proper shape by counsel and precept, leaded or cemented by brotherly kindness and love, then brought to the blessed light of God's great truth and loving kindness, leaving results to this higher power.

Watch how that soul will expand and scintillate in the light of God's dear countenance, growing daily brighter and stronger, with every triumph gained, until it becomes a flawless gem, fit for heaven's royal diadem.

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XXV

VANITY

NOWHERE have I sensed the littleness of human greatness, the vanity of life, as here in this hall, on the second floor of the Museum at Cairo. As one climbs the broad staircase and steps into the room, it seems like stepping back five thousand years into the past, a spanning of the ages.

Never does one sense this more greatly than when looking upon the mummified form of Rameses II, the great Sesostris himself, who since his unwrapping and exposure to the light is fast going back to dust, despite all the care lavished upon him.

To think! Once the destinies of the world were ruled by him, by even the nod of his head, and without appeal.

Still in that wrinkled face of ninety years, with its hawklike beak, the wide gaps in the horrible teeth, we can trace the imperious look of the ruler. The dried, blackened skin, the stained whitish hair, covers the empty skull. What force of will, of passion, what colossal ambition and pride must have dwelt therein.

Still in death is his imperiousness shown, for with his unwrapping of the thousand times layers of linen woven from aloe fiber, "finer than the muslins of India"—when these were removed, he raised his right hand, in commanding gesture, as it remains today. Scientists explain this as the influence of the sun upon the naked arm, expanding the bone of the elbow. Be this as it may, the arm is raised, and will remain so until decomposition has done its work.

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Alas, for human greatness and pride! Today a horrible scarecrow, toothless and grinning, in his filthy rags that once was his splendid shroud. Once he gave so much thought to the overmastering desire of assuring the magnificence, the inviolability of his pyramidial tomb, now placed here on exhibition, exposed to the vulgar stare of curious visitors. No doubt he thought, in untold ages to come, there might be a possibility of his form mingling with the desert sands. But never this! There it lies, nearly naked, exposed beneath a pane of glass.

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XXVI

INDIAN SUMMER

HOW came it to be named Indian Summer, this mythical season which comes after the frost—after the inexpressible glory of the pageantry of autumn—after the blooming of the last rose—after the dropping of the last leaf?

After the chill of autumn rains and slight flurries of snow, is it not marvelous that such a season should come to us, notwithstanding in many cases it is of but brief duration? Yet it is more wonderful than all the radiant beauty that has gone before. This delightful season that fills all the silence with its shimmering haze—gathering within its filmy embrace the entire landscape. . . . Softening and rounding all her rugged angles. Every nook and hollow is filled with amber and tarnished gold of fallen leaves. Moss-grown rails and broken stones in wayside walls are draped in denuded vines—faded goldenrod and frosted ferns. Hips and haws are ruddy in sheltered corners—a dainty filigrance of empty seed pods of the various weeds, and frail, beautiful blooms that crowned the summer and made the ways so sweet. When every zephyr was incense pinioned, and the golden bell of happiness, through the passing hours was constantly rung. Crystal waters, as they rippled and wimpled, flashed back the sunlight—and reflected the blue of over-arching skies.

Now the streams, clasped in the bosom of the hills, are of hues of washed silver, and so the empty seed

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vessels weave their patterns, or lift their crowns in groups along the hillsides, all glorified by the haze into things of softened beauty, on which the sun sheds a tender light.

There is a lingering odor of ripened, garnered fruit, on the dreamy air, and over all a blending of hues in the softly veiling sunlight . . . Merging at last into a wondrous design shot through with threads of amethyst and gold that rests lightly across the hills—draping the forest and filling the vales with an enchantment of tranquillity.

Indian Summer! How perfectly this appellation fits the occasion for this halcyon period of the waning year, for it must always be associated with the memory of the red men. Its subdued hues of porphyry reds, rust browns and dusky yellows, remind one of the stained, worn garments of an Indian. The incense from burning leaves upon the evening air recalls the smoke of his campfire. A memory of him pervades all the peaceful, silent slumber of the woodlands. There is a reminder also of his wigwams in the long rows of gathered maize, like tepees that extend across the fallow lands, where the lengthened furrows are like his raven tresses. . . . The pools in forest depths are like the flashes of his dark eyes, the dropping leaf, like the stealthy touch of his moccasined feet. How well his dress conforms with all the hues of which the season boasts!

In perfect keeping are the mellow-hued skies, the dreamy haze, the sense of undefined sadness pervading all things. . . . It is the season when the fruits of the earth have been gathered. When the last nut has slipped its sheath, and the frost has given a pungency

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to the air. It is the season when the young and the aged, with red blood in their veins, desire to be abroad in the fields, or roving wood and hills.

This season that so fitly bears the name of the red men must have been to them a season of delight, in which they realized the fullness of content. . . . Yet like the Indian Summer of life so fleeting—so brief.

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XXVII

A MOORLAND

A BROKEN, gray cart track leads across the downs. Here are thickets of gorse still flaunting their gleaming gold. This roadway skirts the edge of the moorland and winds on and on, from one little hamlet to another, usually forming the one street through those clusters of stone cots, low, whitewashed, and thatched with straw, that are so picturesque and interesting to the traveler.

From those gray roads many diverging paths lead up and across the moorlands. The elevation gained, what a picture of rare loveliness awaits one, for in the vast sweep of the vision there is purple, purple everywhere, until it merges into the silver of distant haze through which the great tors are dimly defined.

Here the paths wind aimlessly, leading across heather-crowned crests or following the rocky course of dingles in whose furze-smothered depths, amber-hued burns are crooning their lullabys.

Here are great granite boulders strewn about, or like patches of silver showing through the meagre crust of earth, a scene of rugged grandeur.

The prevailing note in this great picture is of royal hue, but here and there one beholds splashes of ochre among the olive, green, and bronze of purple-tipped heather, the burnt sienna and vandyke brown of the soil. Brown are the grouse that feed among the heather. Brown are the hares that burrow among its roots.

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Soft, silvery gray is the haze that enfolds the far-away landscape to the shadowy uplift of the tors.

Come with me into this sunlit howlow, I will show you that which it has been the good fortune of but few to discover. A tuft of white heather, the purest flower that blooms. Nature doles it out but sparingly. A bit here, a hint there, like shreds of rarest lace, or immeshed moonbeams. It has been defined thus: "It symbolizes sincere affection and unselfish love, and tender wishes as pure as prayer."

In olden days, and may be still, it was considered the rarest gift a knight could offer his lady-love, and with her acceptance there was plighted troth. Yes! You may pluck a spray, it means the highest good fortune. Present it to your fiancée, it will be the highest compliment you can pay her.

A moorland is like a mistress of many moods. One hour she is all smiles and sunshine, when one may lie among the fragrant heather and watch the white clouds floating lazily in the blue, far overhead.

In the great silence and calm, lulled to a restful companionship with nature, one may drift away into dreamland and forget there are such things as care and sorrow. The hours will pass noiselessly until the setting sun floods all the west with glory and touches the ling to burnished gold.

Then again, at night stand there, when the stars are sown broadcast in the firmament, and there is only sky and earth, and vastness, immeasurable vastness all one's own, until you come to sense the presence of the Almighty.

Then, again, climb there in wet weather, when shrouding mists creep up and folds one around in a

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great white mystery, like an impenetrable wall, and know the depth of isolation.

Or on some afternoon, when there is chill and damp, when there are fleeing mists and scudding rains, until the tors are blotted out. Then if you are a true lover of nature her every changing mood will possess its peculiar charm.

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XXVIII

BOOKS

(Paper read before the Michigan Authors' Association)

WHEN we wish to learn something regarding illustrious men who lived ages ago, deeds of valor or historic events of some far-off period, we procure a work on that subject, open the book and read. The portals of the past swing inward and upon the stage of the mind those scenes and events are enacted for our delectation and instruction.

So, also, if we desire to leave to the generations who will follow us a record of the happenings of our day, the things we ourselves have done, we sit down and carefully transcribe them on paper, then they are printed in book form, given to the world, and if worthy will find their way into the most remote sections of the earth, and so may be obtainable centures after we have gone the way of all earth. Thus is immortality secured.

In every soul two mighty cravings exist that cannot be entirely supplanted even though the mind be absorbed in daily tasks of maintaining life and a foothold among the straining, pushing mass of money-mad humanity.

The one is to learn how those lived in the dim ages that have preceded us, how they subsisted, their ambitions, their struggles, their triumphs. The other is to transmit our own names, the memory of our deeds, to those who will come after us. Though they may seem trifling to the world they may have importance in our own estimation.

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This longing for immortality is never absent from any human soul, else why do men write their names in all sorts of public places or in the most obscure niches, covering vast walls with names whom no one stops nor cares to read. Why are they cut in the barks of trees, scratched in stones and caves, engraved on monuments, or historic relics like those unimportant personages who have so carefully cut their names in the mighty stones at Baalbek and on the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey. Upon the sands of every seashore you will find them written with infinite pains and attractive flourishes, although it is well understood the first oncoming wave must obliterate them effectually.

Between the two eternities we are not content with our present existence; we desire to live both in the past and in the future.

In the present age we derive great satisfaction and pleasure from books, whose number is beyond computation. What think you must be the surprise of that all wise sage, Solomon, who in his day exclaimed, "Of the making of many books there is no end!" could he know that any morning a million books are foisted upon the market, good, bad, and indifferent, as the case may be. Some few, perhaps, to find their way into the world's classics, others such as no literary person can afford to waste precious time in their perusal, another portion to be cast aside as worthless, a drug on the market, a dead loss to the author, and no credit to the publisher.

Some of the very books which called forth this remark above quoted have come down to us of the present time, although none are found in the form of the books we have today. For paper has not been manufactured for more than seven hundred years at the longest.

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Before this, other materials were employed for writing upon. Barks of trees, skins of animals, this is the parchment still in use for rare documents, cuningly worked fibers of plants, which was known as papyrus, even thin layers of wood coated with wax on which characters were carefully engraved with a sharp-pointed instrument, the stylus. Those simple methods have preserved for us the records that extend back many thousands of years before the invention of paper, or the present form of books.

Reading those wonderful records, we find the world much the same then as today, with its loves, its hates, intrigues and ambitions, its heroisms and cowardice. There was naturally some difference in dress and customs, a lesser range of knowledge, for then vast portions of the earth still were unexplored.

Then the nations of the earth followed the peaceful industry of cultivating the soil, clustered in vast cities, were governed by monarchs, engaged in commerce and warfare, excelled in all useful and ornamental arts.

Then the mind, looking backward, tries to penetrate a more remote age, with questions, whence came those races of men, where did they acquire those arts, those ideas of government? For there must indeed have been a beginning!

We now enter a period when none of the substitutes for paper we have mentioned had yet been thought of. Then there were walls of rock and slabs of granite, whose surface needed only to be smoothed and they were ready for the instrument, however crude. Fortunately for us, the same desire for immortality existed; in those dim centuries men were actuated with aspirations, the passionate wish to perpetuate their

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memory, that they caused to be transcribed, with the most infinite painstaking, the strange characters, which, happily, we are able to decipher in this age of higher culture. Thus men have reared at great expense vast temples and pyramids, which they vainly imagined would perpetuate their memory for all time.

Today a mere heap of rubbish marks their site, but among that rubbish tiny tablets of sun-baked clay, having withstood the touch of time, reveal by their traced records the names and deeds of those who filled the niche in life allotted them, joyed and sorrowed and then passed on.

In the British Museum we find tablets from the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon that give an account of the deluge that is as far back as any known literature extends, although there are myths of the Garden of Eden and the fall of man.

Thus on every part of the globe are found evidences of flourishing nations that have existed. Sometimes a crudely sculptured rock or a cluster of ruins, silent in their abandonment and desolation, but not dumb, for to the scholar they yield their priceless story of the customs, the history, the divinities and the religious ceremonies of those long-forgotten races as well as their poetry and incantations.

Thus we read from out this great book of the past, for each of these are as so many leaves, this wonderful story that man through all the ages have traced with such patient care, on every surface since he became familiar with the art of perpetuating thought by characters or visible signs. Thus the old, old story has come down to us through the ages with unflagging interest.

It was the Phoenicians who invented letters and

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Cadmus who introduced them into Greece one thousand five hundred years B. C. The Romans wrote on one side of the parchment and attached the end of one sheet to another, and when the work was completed it was rolled on a staff or cylinder, hence the word "volume," a scroll.

Julius Caesar introduced the method of dividing the continuous scroll into sections and folding them into convenient measures with the pages numbered as at the present time.

Ptolemy Philadelphus collected at Alexandra a library of 700,000 volumes. This famous library was destroyed by the Saracens in A. D. 642.

Augustus founded a Greek and Latin library in Apollo's Temple on Palantine Hill. Others were collected in the Capitol and in the house of Tiberius, beside many private collections of rare value, and all this literature before the art of printing was known in book-making.

The number of books in the world today cannot be computed. The amount of books and periodicals published each week is stupendous. One firm alone, The Curtis Company, Philadelphia, have an output of twelve million periodicals each month.

The world constantly demands more and more literature. The time is at hand when the person who has not written a book will be an exception. There are few people of importance who have not published something.

"The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past—
But they shall last;
In the dread Judgment they
And we shall meet."

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XXIX

TWIN FIR TREES

THEY sprang from the same soil, and what is more, their seed came from the same cone, dropped from the parent bough and carried by the wind. They germinated at length and grew side by side. In winter the same drift covered them with its ermine blanket of snow. In the springtime the same sunshine warmed them and gently set their sap to flowing along their tiny veins. The same summer zephyrs kissed them and toyed with their dainty fronds, and brought them balm stolen from fairest blooms.

It was perhaps their fifth winter, when a severe storm tore from a nearby maple a huge branch and cast it to earth, where it lay crushing beneath its weight one of the baby evergreens. There it remained until one winter a gatherer of fire wood cut the branch, lifted, and bore it away. Still the baby evergreen remained in its crippled condition, held fast to earth with the frozen ice and snow.

When Spring came once more, and the genial sunshine warmed the banks of snow, there was the creeping of myriads of tiny rivulets through the mosses, until the frosts of winter disappeared. As boughs of our tiny evergreen were released, it tried to lift its head in the sunshine until it nearly regained an upright position. But, alas, it would never be perfect again.

As the years rolled by, the uninjured one grew in symmetry and beauty. The injured one was retarded

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in its growth, in that its wounds must be healed. When this was accomplished, it began to thrive and grew in beauty. And ever it strove to hide with its thick lower branches the scar the fallen limb had inflicted.

At first the brother tree was very tender, and tried to shield the injured one from storms and observation as well. One day he caught sight of a young larch tree, graceful, and exquisitely gowned in silver-green, with a coronet of coral buds among her fair tresses, as she coquetted with the lightest breeze that danced across the swamp of evergreens.

The healthy brother began to flirt, as young things will, and then it was all off with him. He began to take on airs, and one would judge from his manner that he was somewhat ashamed of his crippled brother. And like "Tibbie," in the "Window of Thrums," when she met her husband the bill sticker on the street, did not let on that she "kenned him."

The time came when through the autumn days the big brother took to himself airs of importance, and upon every occasion he found it convenient to mention to the brother, who only reached to his shoulder, that undoubtedly he would soon be chosen and on his way to the glorious city, where he would, without, doubt, grace the home of some millionaire. By the hour he would expatiate on the richness and glory of tinsel and ornaments with which he would be decked out, and the tip of each tiny twig would have its jeweled light, when each bough would be laden with costly gifts, and his spreading arms would shelter heaps of priceless packages. He would be the center of attraction, of the greetings, music, and song, the shouts and laughter of happy children.

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"As for you," he said, "it will no doubt be a number of years before you can hope to be taken, and then it will probably be some almshouse or mechanic's home of the lowest order that you will have the privilege of gracing," and then he smiled.

There came a day when there was the sound of cheerful voices, and the quick blows of sharpened axes, resounding through the thick, evergreen swamp. A few sharp blows and our debonnaire evergreen lay supine upon the moss. As it was thrust aside the question was asked, "Shall I cut this smaller one as well?"

"Certainly," came the answer. "It is just the size many persons require. It will be a beauty if cut just above the injured part."

It chanced the smaller tree was wrapped in the center of a bundle composed of larger trees, and so reached the city without injury, which is usually unavoidable in transit.

In the city the dealer displayed his wares by ranging the evergreens in a long row in the inclosure in the rear of his place of business. It was the day before Christmas, and many persons came to purchase their tree for Christmas.

There were purchasers of all classes and conditions. Women in sealskins and women with shawls over their heads. Each one began by grasping the larger, finer specimens, haggling over the prices, and then throwing them back against the wall when they deemed the prices too exorbitant. It chanced that our proud evergreen was taken from its place and examined by a prospective purchaser, which left exposed the despised brother, who had remained hidden until then.

A well-dressed gentleman and lady stood just outside

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of this pulling, scrambling throng, watching with seemingly great interest this eager bargaining. The lady chanced to spy the little evergreen as soon as it became uncovered. She darted forward and clasped the little evergreen in her arms, and brought it to her husband. "Oh, what a darling tree!" she exclaimed. "It is just what we want. I had not hoped for such a beauty."

"I will take this tree," the gentleman said, and paid at once the price when given. They bore it tenderly to their waiting auto, so that not the least injury might come to its branches.

After the saloon keeper, who had been haggling over the price of our superb evergreen, and thrown it against the wall, where its top rested for a space, then some one in passing tripped over it, which brought the tree to the ground. Other trees were dragged across it, and it was trampled upon, bruised, and frayed, until when it was discovered it had deteriorated in value as well as in beauty, so much so that the saloon keeper would not have taken it at any price.

Midnight, when business was ended, the tree with several other trees which had become worthless, stood huddled together in one corner of the inclosure, where they shivered in the cold and darkness.

Christmas Eve. In the library of a substantial bungalow on one of the principal avenues in N——— stands our erstwhile crippled evergreen, a thing of beauty, decked out with all the beautiful things which the boastful brother had so glowingly described to his less fortunate brother in the home swamp, those golden autumn days.

There glowed the luscious red-cheeked apples and golden oranges, with fringes of striped sticks of candies,

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showed through tinsel and festoons of colored popcorn, and weighted the boughs whose every branch was tipped with a tiny waxen taper. Everywhere about the tree hung toys and gifts so dear to children's hearts. There stood the little evergreen, glorified, with its every bough as perfect as when it stood humiliated in the august presence of the now sadly bedraggled and dilapidated brother, who, bundled with others, shivered in the dark of the littered yard of the wholesale grocer.

Its lower branches covered the parcels placed about its base. In the room the lights were turned low. The tree dimly defined. The parents and little ones were assembled in the twilight. The father repeats the sweetest of stories, the birth of the Christ child in the manger of Bethlehem so many centuries ago. Together they sang that dear old hymn, "When Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night," and "Holy Night." Then the father lighted the Christmas tree. Each bough held a tiny tongue of flame. As it grew in brightness, there were shouts of glee, the rapture of happy voices of the children. Then came the distribution of gifts, until the slender arms of each one was filled to overflowing.

An hour after the usual bed time the little heads began to nod. Soon in snow-white beds, the little arms close clasping their Christmas toys, the children slept.

It was a happy thought of the father, the placing of the end of the tree in a deep receptacle filled with wet sand, that kept the tree with all its freshness of green until into the New Year. Then it was placed close to the window outside, where it gave the appearance of a growing evergreen. Snows weighted the branches,

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as the Christmas decorations and gifts had done. Snowbirds sported about it and showered the stainless snow to the earth. They hid beneath its shielding boughs, in stress of storm.

Thus winter passed and came the spring, the time for putting the lawns in order and planting the gardens. The little tree was set in the center of the tiny plat that was the children's garden. The little ones dug about it and heaped the soil about its base, then therein they planted seeds of the morning glory. Soon it was a tent of delicate green leaves and vines, and later as the children looked from their nursery window, the first sight that met their gaze was their tent of green, glorified in crimson, white, and purple blooms. When the days of frost and cold drew near and the flowers along the garden ways drooped and faded, this tent of beauty still retained a marvelous freshness, for the father had protected it from frost and storm by a contrivance of a cone fashioned from many thicknesses of paper.

Then when they, too, had yielded and gone to sleep, the father stripped it of dead vines and carefully preserved each tiniest twig, and cut the body and larger boughs into lengths. And when the first storms of winter arrived, the parents and little ones assembled about the hearth, and ignited the tiny bonfire in the grate, which was formed of the dear little Christmas tree.

While they watched the tongues of flame lap up the seasoned twigs, that gave out an odor of the woods, they recalled all the events connected with that particular tree that had been such a joy at Yuletide, and such a delight through all the summer and golden autumn days. And so the despised evergreen left a fragrant memory in loving hearts.

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XXX

A VENETIAN OUTING

ANDREA was forever planning excursions many days ahead. No matter how great the distance or how late I lingered, he was ever the same, willing, good natured fellow. One afternoon he took me across the waters of the Sacra della Misericonda, to explore the Casino degli Spiriti, a charming old palace situated in the midst of the garden of the Contarini del Zaffo, built in the sixteenth century, and is believed by all Venice to be haunted. It has its legend as well.

There are sufficient reasons to believe the place is haunted, without accepting the legend. It is set in the dreariest and most lonesome spot in all Venice; oft-times lost in the fogs that envelop it from a stagnant lagoon.

It is at this place where the Venetians were wont to halt and rest their dead, when on their way to San Michele. Under the cloak of this superstitious belief, it became a rendezvous for a band of smugglers, who could here land and secrete their goods, without fear of investigation.

I must acknowledge there is something uncanny about those deserted rooms, with their dust and cob-webs. One's footsteps seem to give out a strange echo, and we were not a little startled when there seemed to be a footfall at our side, and once there appeared to be the whisper of a voice in the rooms and also in the garden, which we could scarcely accept. I

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have no doubt it could be accounted for, some drain or pipe, or some trick of nature; but to us it came as a breathless voice.

Notwithstanding we laughed, and made light of the matter, Andrea was a shade whiter, and I know we each breathed freer when we had left the gruesome precinct.

As if by a tacit agreement, Andrea rowed across the lagoon to Fusima, where we wandered far along the white highways, lazed and loitered in the afternoon sunshine; reveling in the charm of green fields and waving trees, which one misses and longs for even in Venice.

As we caught the sound of song and happy voices of toilers among the vines, Andrea at my side told me of a rosy-cheeked signorina, who lived not far distant, in the little hamlet, Ill Contente. How their troth was plighted, only Sonia could not leave her invalid mother, and with him there was also an aged mother needing his support and care, who idolized her son, as well she might, and would not listen to sharing her love nor her home with another woman, even such a daughter-in-law as Sonia.

"Here is the tram," I said. "Let us go to Ill Contente."

Andrea, only too willing for the outing, we sprang aboard, and in a few moments reached our destination. Indeed, the fellow had been leading that direction all the while.

Here was a humble cot, set beneath the limes, a grapevine trained about its door. As we alighted I discovered at the wayside a cluster of Bouncing Bet, which I seized upon instantly. For were they not as

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friends from home, having been associated with my earliest recollection of an old garden at home.

I became the subject for smiles and remarks from idle peasants, who congregated as if by magic. No doubt they were jibes, as they were in Italian. Andrea would not inform me, he only smiled when I broached the subject.

Out among the vines there was a note of color, a red kerchief and white sleeves, where Sonia was clipping the superfluous tendrils that were sapping the stocks.

One glance and Andrea vanished in the direction of that bit of color, and I was left alone in the rustic porch, with my despised blossoms.

It was two hours before the tram from Padua would be due, but how quickly it passed for those lovers out there in the summer sunshine among the vines. No need to ask of what they were speaking. They lost no time, for when the noise of the approaching tram reached us there was the putting aside of clinging arms, a hasty kiss and farewells, and Andrea had to run for it.

Returning from Fusima not a breath ruffled the lagoon. The islands in their flawless beauty slumbered peacefully. In the extreme distance a steamer from Trieste hung out long scarfs of smoke, and here and there the slender line of a gondola disturbed the tranquillity of the scene. In the radiant glory of setting sun, nestled an old rose, ochre and silver Venice. The dream city beside the sea.

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XXXI

KRASNAGORKA

(The Festival of the Dead)

THIS is one of the most characteristic of Russian holidays. It is considered to be a Christian festival, but contains much of the pagan. This festival of Spring and awakening life, takes place in cemeteries. Usually the entire population of town and country goes to the cemetery for a picnic.

We were a trifle late for the service, but Ivan led me through the sacristy, and from our vantage point near the high altar, we obtained a fine view of the entire church and service without the inconvenience and annoyance of being shoved and crowded by the gathering throng.

The entire space of the pavement beneath the dome was covered with napkins on which were placed little piles of a peculiar, Russian cake, basins of rice, and brightly-dyed eggs in purples, greens, and blue, and also there were clusters of raisins and figs.

Each basin had its lighted wax taper, stuck in the rice. With each collection of food was also a little tablet, or a red covered book, in which was recorded the names of the dead of that especial family.

When I questioned the reason of this elaborate display of food, Ivan informed me it was for the dead. Ah, here was a new experience, and promised one of great interest.

A priest was standing at the end nearest the altar, and commenced reading the names from a sheaf of

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tablets he held in his hand. Those were the names of deceased persons for whom the food had been provided and brought hither for sanctification.

The reading of those names consumed quite two hours. When the task was completed he passed around the feast with a smoking censor, with which he made the sign of the cross. Then the concourse present took up the strain and sang an Easter hymn, "Christ is risen from the dead." This ended, each person, after kneeling and kissing a crucifix, held by the priest, sought out their offering of food, then took their departure.

"Let us hasten," said Ivan, and again we passed through the sacristy, slipped quickly around the cathedral and took our position near the main portal, where were congregated perhaps two dozen beggars, dirty and betattered, bearded old men and as many old women and children. There they stood with mouths opened wide, and as each person passed those with wooden spoons ladeled into each open mouth this food which had been prepared for the dead.

If food came faster than it could be swallowed, each had a sack of some sort fastened about the neck, which caught the surplus food. The sight, had it not been so pathetic and disgusting, would have been amusing. This evidently was the beggar's harvest. They ate ravenously, and with each helping of eggs, cake, rice or fruit, they were told to eat what was offered them in the name of the dead.

Then there was an exodus for the cemeteries on foot and with all sorts of conveyances, each person carrying their napkin of sanctified food, or what was left of it. Arrived at the cemetery, I was somewhat surprised at bursts of song and laughter, which reached us. All

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the day, gay throngs came and went until set of sun.

This cemetery we visited was surrounded with tall cypresses. Many pines grew among the graves, which were newly clothed with fresh, green sod. About many of the graves seats were arranged where one might sit and rest or pray. It seemed strange to find samovars simmering among the graves, where hundreds of wax tapers were flickering among the spring blossoms.

Here the food was placed upon the graves. Many of the bright colored eggs were buried in the soil, that the sleepers below might share in the feast.

From grave to grave, where his services were requested, went a gray-bearded monk, garbed in a habit of dark purple. He held a brief service over each resting place. It began with "Grant to this one who has passed away, O Christ, to obtain Thy unspeakable glory," and ended with "Give rest, O Christ, to the soul of thy servant." Then after each member present had again kissed the wooden cross, he held, he passed to the next grave.

One would have judged the beggars at the church door might not have occasion to eat again for several days; but on they came, following in the wake of the priest, craving more food and disposing of all that was given them, cakes, eggs, rice and raisins, until one wondered where they stowed it all away. They, too, had their part in this peculiar festival; they acted as substitutes for the dead, and was a reminder of this adage, "In the living we find our dead again."

This is also a day of reminiscences, when all the virtues of the dead are recalled. How many years have passed since they went home? All animosities, all

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differences, if any there were, have been forgotten, and today the feast is spread for the beloved dead. Not dead, for they live again in the more glorious mansions above. This is the calm faith of the Russian.

And so, at many graves there was song, jest and laughter, love making and idle wandering about; yet it was not all thus, for at many graves there were lamentations and tears, as sorrow had been too recent.

There were numerous graves where no feast had been provided. Forgotten graves. Perhaps their kindred all have, too, entered into the great silence. No one of that throng of merrymakers that day thought to place even a tiny sprig of bloom upon those forsaken graves. This is the way of the world—we have thought only for our own.

As we proceeded homeward in the fading light, we spoke much of Death and the Resurrection, of the life in the Great Beyond. Back yonder in the cemetery there were many children, only waiting the departure of the multitude when they would resurrect every buried egg.

"Is not that sacrilege?" I asked.

"Nay, nay," said Ivan, "it is quite proper, they will take everything—flowers, tapers, every crumb will be removed. This will benefit the living more than the dead. They have had all we sent them."

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XXXII

NIGHT AMONG THE JUDEAN HILLS

SLOWLY the red-gold of sunset faded from the Judean hills. Fawn-footed twilight stole up from the vales. The grey deepened until it blotted out the field of Boaz. The vales were hidden and then deep night folded her mantle over a sleeping world.

At first there were many lights and the chanting of many voices in the hillside town of Bethlehem, for in the Church of the Nativity a solemn service was being held to commemorate the glorious event which transpired there many centuries ago.

For the nonce, all animosities of the different religious factions, who worship there and claim a portion of the Church, was forgotten or called a truce, in this precious season that so nearly affects the whole world.

There were lights and flowers on the various altars; indeed, there appears to have been a sort of rivalry among the different sects. In the grotto, once the stable of a Kahan, there was a blaze of lights, a kneeling, motley throng, in which nearly every nation of the world was represented.

The little stone replica of the manger that once cradled the infant Christ is there in its niche; it still holds the straw, but the blessed Christ Child ages ago grew to manhood, paid the awful price for the redemption of mankind and went home to His Father's house on high.

In commemoration of this event of His coming to earth many kisses were impressed upon the crude little manger, and it was wet with grateful tears.

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Midnight! A purple sky o'erarches the Judean hills. Great, glorious orbs that scintillate a myriad of diamond points, keep ward over a sleeping land.

In the little hillside town of Bethlehem there is not a gleam of light, all doors are barred, all windows are closed with their wooden shutters, for its dwellers have sought repose.

Along the hillsides all is dense darkness, except where the grey-green olives, with starbeams touching their crests, make a slight fluff of grey in the velvety gloom.

In the hillside pastures, shepherds still guard their flocks. Long since the satisfied sheep assembled and settled down a huddled mass for warmth and rest. The weary shepherds have folded their burnous about them, and with their head pillowed upon some stone, are wrapped in slumber most profound.

The tomb of Rachel looms a shadowy mass against the sky. The stones of the broken curb of the Holy Well are lost in the gloom, but in its depth a great gleaming star is mirrored to show the well is there.

There is not a sound of human life. Tonight no Wise Men from the Far East are there. No star to lead them until it stands over the manger, in the Kahan of Bethlehem, for no infant Christ is there.

But over this spot angelic hosts are hovering, singing the glorious song of redemption. Year after year, through the ages new voices have been added to this heavenly choir. They are singing tonight. Mortal eye may not behold them, but the human ear, rightly attuned, might catch the magnificent strophe. "Glory to God in the highest! On earth peace, good will toward men."

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XXXIII

SAN LAZZARO

SAN LAZZARO, the loveliest and most alluring of all the islands in the lagoon, viewed in that marvelous light that is found only in Venice when slumberous bells call to each other across the water, when tinted sails fade softly into the hazy distance, it seems like some exquisitely tinted flower, to float in ether.

How etherial it all appears, fragile as frost-sprite's tracery and as easily dissolved; yet its ineffable beauty sinks into the soul never to become effaced.

At the Lido, for four lire a gondolier can be engaged to row one across to San Lazarro, the Armenian monastery, over which floats the fiery flag with its crescent, for the dwellers of San Lazarro are subjects of the Sultan of Turkey, yet it casts no shadow over the peaceful lives of those gentle monks.

With what kindly courtesy they welcome the guest, leading him first to Byron's room, as the library is called, which he occupied while a student there. It is a pleasant room overlooking the sea. Ever before him was that emblem of infinity. Here is the chair and the table at which he worked, and where visitors are requested to write their names in a ponderous book.

There are three libraries in all, in which are some copies of the Bible that are exceedingly rare; one, the most wonderful of all, written and illuminated by one person, undoubtedly the work of a lifetime—and his name is not even known.

The chapel with its subtle odor of incense is also

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shown with a becoming pride, as well as the refectory and kitchen—models of cleanliness.

In the printing room a number of brothers are running off sheets of some Armenian translations, for many Armenian works are published here as well as works in thirty different languages; excellent examples of the printer's art and fine mementos for friends at home.

In the court of the cloister is a mammoth cedar of Lebanon, a great glossy-leaved magnolia, heavy with its waxen blossoms, masses of roses, a riot of color, noticeable among them one of deepest crimson hue, from which is prepared that delectable preserve of rose leaves, steeped in syrup. One ounce of the principal ingredient, which is a secret with the monks, calls for the petals of five hundred roses.

Should one chance to be an invited guest, this preserve is served with diminutive cakes sweetened with honey, and a tiny glass of rare old wine, a feast worthy to be offered the gods.

Surrounding this abode of peace, a well-tilled garden stretches to the sea, filled with many varieties of vegetables, fruits and vines.

Around this peaceful, beautiful life stretches the stone walls, like shielding arms, and the sea, like a tender mother, cradles it like a babe upon her placid bosom.

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XXXIV

HOLY SATURDAY IN FLORENCE

LONG before the hour we were ready. Alfredo had donned his shining alpaca coat and flaming red tie; Sonia and the two bambinos were gaudy in gala attire. As it neared the hour we all set out for the Piazza del Duomo. The occasion was the "Scoppio del Carro" (the bursting of the car), a medieval festival, which takes place at high noon on Holy Saturday.

It had its foundation in an ancient legend concerning the Pozzi family, one of its members whom, it is said, first planted the Christian banner on the walls of Jerusalem during the first war of the Crusaders. For this feat, as if that was not honor sufficient in itself, Sir Geffori de Bouillon presented him with a flint from the Holy Sepulchre.

This flint was brought to Florence on his return and for safekeeping was deposited in Santo Repatara and was used for kindling the Holy Fire on Easter day; for which purpose it is still employed, although it is now guarded in the treasury of the ancient basilica Santa Apasti.

Along each la Strada as we neared the Piazza was a throng of people all hastening Duomaward. When we reached the Piazza, early as we were, the great Duomo was packed to its utmost capacity, the immense square was one sea of heads, a kaleidoscope of bright hues.

Sonia wept and wrung her hands and her sharp little tongue was voluble with Italian phrases. "Now the good Americano Signore would nothing see of their

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beautiful festival, after all! She had hurried and hurried! She wanted to start *un quarto d'ora*, but Jesu, it was ever the way with Alfredo, he never did things like other people, she said.

Alfredo only smiled. "Don't be a bambino, Sonia," he said. "Do you not know Guspare is my friend and Guspare is custodian of the tower?"

"But Guitto's is closed to the public, ever during the festa!" she averred.

"Well, what of that? He still has the keys and he has promised us, with the Signore, a station at one of the windows and that is Guspare now signaling us this moment from that corner casement."

Then Sonia's face was radiant with smiles and she clapped her hands as she said, "O haste, haste!"

We soon found we had an Italian crowd to reckon with. The crushing of this good-natured crowd was somewhat alarming, but no accidents occurred, as Alfredo worked his way among them, the bambinos on his shoulders, Sonia close at his heels and the Signore not far in the rear. It was the best-natured crowd I had ever mingled with.

At the door of the tower it took not a little persuasion and a few soldi as well, but Guspare succeeded in keeping out the rabble while we slipped in, with poor Sonia very much disheveled and the bambinos frightened. We were triumphant and climbed the stairway and thus gained the window.

Here Guspare told how early on the morning of each Holy Saturday the clergy of *il catedrale* went in solemn procession to Sancta Apasti, where the Holy Fire is ignited by means of this sacred flint brought from the Holy City. How carefully they guarded this precious

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flame, which was conveyed in an ancient lantern in which it had been carried for centuries and brought to the Duomo and placed near the high altar.

That same morning we had gone to see the mammoth "Carro" removed from its tall house near the Portal Prato, and drawn by four sleek Tuscan milk-white oxen with gilded horns and wreathed in roses, to the Piazza del Duomo.

There it was now waiting opposite the main portal of the cathedral. An exceedingly ugly structure it was, this "Carro," dull chocolate in hue, although it was covered with dolphins which was the heraldic device of the Pozzi family.

This car was covered with a large quantity of fireworks. A bright wire connected the car with the high altar of the cathedral.

At the conclusion of the high mass, the notes of the "Gloria in Excelsis" sung in the cathedral stole out over the waiting throng. The glorious chimes in the tower rang out o'erhead, then all heads were uncovered, all eyes turned to the great portal, a breathless silence, and then a shout, "It comes, it comes!"

Straight out from the high altar, through the wide portal, across the upturned faces of the waiting assemblage, it flew straight to the car, a small, metal dove, bearing in its beak the sacred fire, which as it touched the car exploded the fireworks.

Amidst great shouting, laughter and clapping of hands the rockets and Roman candles flew hither and thither, while the crowd pelted each other with flowers and threw confetti. Then the dove flew straight back again to the altar from whence it had been sent.

All present pronounced it a favorable augury for

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the coming harvest; this augury is based on the dove's correct, or erratic flight.

During the display beside me Sonia was holding up her bambinos that their little eyes too might see the wonderful display, the while she was huzzaing and shouting like a street urchin.

Then it was all ended. Like a mighty surging tide the crowd melted away. We waited, went leisurely down and entered the deserted cathedral. Sonia must say a *Patre Nostre* before the shrine of the Virgin and place an offering on its altar as well.

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XXXV

THE PRISON OF SOCRATES

IT is a matter of deep regret that there are few sacred places whose authenticity is not questioned. The prison of Socrates is one of these. One approaches with reverence the dungeons excavated in the ledge of rocks at Athens. This one, in which one of the purest souls this earth has ever known, some four hundred years before Christ suffered on Calvary, was imprisoned. Here he drank the poison draught of hemlock, forced upon him by the Athenians, and by this act gained immortality.

This prison consists of two cave-like excavations in the solid rock; the inner one is claimed to have served as a prison, although its authenticity has been disputed. But what of that? The spot where Christ was hung upon the cross at Jerusalem is disputed as well, but the whole area is holy ground, because of His death. So the hill at Athens is hallowed by the death of this noble being.

Socrates was the man whom Aristophanes delighted in ridiculing, terming him a "pale-faced, bare-foot, hair-splitting sophist." Nevertheless his thoughts and character have left their irradicable impression upon the world for all time.

In his youth Socrates was a sculptor, but not a success. He had the habit of standing for hours, or even for a night and day together, wholly lost in thought. The idea was forced upon him that he was inspired. Forsaking his work, he visited the temples and strolled

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through the market places, talking with any who cared to listen.

Notwithstanding people called him a sophist, he gave no course of study, neither charged a fee. He believed he was fulfilling a heaven-appointed mission, in this quest of truth, in which to better mankind; claiming true knowledge gained thus was the true guide to righteous living, even contending knowledge and virtue were the same thing.

It is said, in Athens where a prepossessing body was regarded as a sign of a beautiful soul, this man was looked upon as "the ugliest of the sons of men," and truly the description of this man is anything but pleasing. A man with an enormously large bald head, protruding eyes, flat nose and thick lips, like those of an African, looking for all the world like those satyr masks one sees in the shop windows at Athens. "Big of body and bandy-legged he stalked like a pelican through the streets, but the pupils who adored him looked beneath this forbidding mask and saw in this noble soul an image of fascinating beauty and was reminded of the absolute perfection of the Almighty."

It may be possible, in some respects, the influence of Socrates was temporarily harmful, for it increased the cleverness of certain disreputable young men without reforming their characters. It cast reflections upon the present existing government, at the time when faith and patriotism were greatly needed; yet in the end his teachings were the means of Athens' regeneration. He was condemned to death on the ground that he corrupted the youth and had been irreverent to the gods.

In his trial, his plea as given by Plato has become one of the mastperpieces in literature. After all this

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able plea, he was found guilty by 281 votes to 220, so was condemned to death.

This day I reverently touched the time-stained walls of that inner prison, while I tried to picture that sad scene of this noble soul as he sat with the cup of poison in his hand while he bade farewell to the weeping friends about him; then quaffed the brew to its very lees and closed his eyes in that sleep that knows no awakening.

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XXXVI

THE CACHO-FIO

(Bringing Home the Yule Log)

THIS year they felled an ancient olive tree, on which the mistletoe had flourished for many years. "It might be his last yule-tide on earth," so said the feeble grandsire, now nearing his ninetieth year. Heretofore it had been an almond, an apple, or a pear tree that had been chosen; but this year it must be an olive, that most sacred of all trees that bears fruit, that they would sacrifice to the Christmas fire.

They were the last of the race, this Grandfather Goldner and his grandson Franz. A year hence he might be left alone to bring down the cacho-fio. This ancient custom had been handed down, an echo of a Druidical ceremonial of that far-off time when the Druid priest cut the yule oak and garnered the sacred mistletoe with his sickle of gold.

This bringing home the yule-log is an annual ceremony in which the entire family must bear some part —this makes of it a sacred rite. At either end of the log the burden rests upon the shoulders of the eldest and the youngest of the family; while in the center many ready hands steady and ease the load.

Theme worthy of artist and poet, this scene as they set forth. The grandsire with his russet, wrinkled, yet smiling face, walking between his grandson and his wife Marie, stepping out boldly as they took their way across the vineyard. They climbed the steep slope, breaking a path through the newly fallen snow, the

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trio babbling and laughing like happy children. Yet there was ever a watchful eye, a steadying hand that unobtrusively helped the failing steps that stumbled upon the broken path.

Gained at length the height where the twisted olives made a wraith of grey smoke against the wintry sky, and held fresh snow wreaths in their gnarled boughs. Here they rested at the cleft, distorted base of a medieval olive, planted by the hand of some Goldner, many generations before. A venerable tree that had the pathetic appearance of sorrowful dignity of trees, who having stood the buffetings of a century of storms, and now tottering to its fall, its days numbered.

Tenderly, tenderly, the arms of the aged sire clasped the bole, and the wrinkled cheek pressed close and lovingly against its mossy side, while he whispered words that must have gladdened the heart of the dying olive. For who shall say trees do not hear and comprehend?

Tremblingly the aged hands took from Franz the gleaming axe, and while perfect silence fell upon them, he gave the first feeble strokes that made such slight impression in the wood, yet sent a tremor through the entire length of the doomed tree, and showered down the fleece of snow, until the whitened locks and the garments were powdered so copiously they transformed the aged grandsire into a veritable Santa Claus.

Priding himself upon his prowess, the aged man returned the axe to his grandson and stood silently, reverently by, while under the more effective strokes of the younger, this patriarch of the orchard yielded to the Christmas sacrifice.

With scarcely an intonation to denote its fall, it

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rested supine upon its bed of stainless snow. Then they severed a yule-log of the desired length, wreathed it in its gray-green boughs and between them bore it triumphantly homeward. The eldest, as was proper, going before, and Franz bearing the larger portion at the rear, while Marie walking beside the grandsire, supported his tottering steps, and it was her shoulder that bore nearly the entire weight, and the old man never knew the difference. And so, at length, they reached the humble cot at the edge of the vineyard, and set the log upon end in the ingle-nook ready for the fireplace on Christmas Eve.

Dedicated to the Christmas fire, the bit of wood had now attained a degree of sacredness and must be treated with reverence, and must suffer no sacrilege.

Christmas Eve, and now the preliminary ceremonies of lighting the Christmas candles over, tenderly, reverently the yule-log was again lifted to their shoulders, and started on its last, triumphant procession, being carried in state three times about the board, where waited the Christmas supper, and around the lighted candles then laid upon the hearth before the waiting embers.

The placing of the yule-log was attended with a ceremony so grave and with all the solemnity of a religious observance, which indeed it is. First the grandsire filled a goblet with vin cue (a cordial that is used for the libation of the Cacho-fio and yule-cup, and is peculiarly a French beverage prepared from wine boiled with other ingredients added), and while they stood reverently by, poured three libations, meanwhile repeating, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son,

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and of the Holy Ghost." Then from the cup refilled they each drank in turn repeating:

"Yule-log, catch fire!
Joy, Joy! God gives us joy!
Christmas comes all good cheer!
May God give us grace to see the coming year.
And if we are not more, may we not be less."

Next followed the placing of the log upon the fire, and a rejoicing as the flame caught the wreaths of olive twigs, transforming the insensate wood to a spirit of living flame.

Then they sat down to the great supper, when the aged sire discoursed continually with sage advice upon the best methods of preserving the yule-log until the New Year, by careful, systematic banking of the coals. Then he spoke of the Cach-fio for the Christmas season a year hence, when they two would have to bring home the log alone, as he would probably not be with them, he said; and of the careful observance of the rite—holding the custom as a sacred trust.

It was the same as later they walked to the midnight mass in the ancient church, he supported on either hand by those devoted grandchildren, while they attended gravely to his sage advice. Marie smiled to herself knowingly. Had she not faithfully attended the Novena, and had she not kissed the sacred relics? Had she not vowed a new beautiful Christ child for the manger of the creche, in the ancient church, at the next year's festivities? The blessed Mother had granted her petition, although it was as yet a secret from her husband.

Again it is the Christmas season. Four persons

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went up the steep hillside where three had gone the previous year. Once more the identical scene was enacted in the old orchard at the summit; only this time it was a more vigorous olive that was chosen. And as they went down through the vineyard with their trophy, it was Franz and the grandsire who side by side went before, carrying the heavier end, while Marie and Franz Jr., a babe of four months, in his mother's arms carried the lighter end of the yule-log resting upon the mother's shoulder—the tiny baby hands touching the sacred wood.

Christmas Eve in the lowly cot. The same sacrificial ceremony, the placing of the yule-log upon the fire; only there was a creche, around which the yule-log was carried, in the same order in which it had been brought down, with the babe in its mother's arms. Then followed the supper, and after that the midnight mass, where in the creche of a miniature Bethlehem, in the old church, it was Marie's golden-haired babe, who rested among the fragrant hay in the crude little manger, and cooed and smiled at the throng who knelt about it.

Home once more, where the aged grandsire, in his easy chair, before the blazing yule-log, insisted, late as it was, he must hold the sleeping great-great-grandchild for a little while before he sought his rest.

This privilege was granted, but at length when the grey head drooped low, and the snowy locks blent with the golden curls of the babe, they thought to remove the sleeping babe carefully, they then discovered the fond grandsire had gone to greet the Christmas beyond the dawning.

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XXXVII

A MORNING SERVICE

"SHALL you attend divine worship this morning?" asked my friend.

"Certainly," I replied, "but it will be in God's cathedral, the great out of doors."

I watched my friends' departure in their shining auto, then I took the highway that dipped to the valley, led across a babbling stream, then climbed an elevation, and wound on and on until it lost itself among the hills.

I left this highway, where a wood embowered way intersected, that led up along the hillside. I knew where midway there was a gap in the stone wall, opening into a tiny meadow. To cross this and then a steep climb among boulders and pines, to where a wide plateau of smooth rocks, formed the pavement of a cathedral under the open sky. Its walls were formed of massed evergreens and spreading oaks, in the midst of an amphitheatre of rounded hills where the sun lay warm upon the mosses, and the sky was of crystalline purity.

It would have been well had I taken the familiar way; but to avoid the steep climb I followed on to where at the farther side of the wood, a trail led along the broken wall of boulders that ran to the summit. I turned too quickly from the road and so lost my way completely among the dense growth and thickets that clothed that mountain side, where creeping vines tripped me and rank brambles clutched me. Never

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was cathedral built with hands as difficult of access as this cathedral of the hills.

There was no danger of missing the sanctuary, only there must be no swerving. Upward, ever upward, no matter how dense the tangle, how treacherous the boulders, or how frequent the tumbles. Only keep the purpose fixed, the eyes upraised, to the glowing summit, o'er-canopied with heaven's blue dome, and thralled in Sabbath stillness and peace.

When at length the perspiring, would-be worshipper had gained the elevation, the mosses were most inviting, the book forgotten, but lying there the wondering eyes upraised to the fathomless blue, as the soul drank in the infinite; for a space it was capable of maintaining a perfect poise. Behold there was a "New heaven and a new earth," and God's smile in the sunshine rested over all.

The message this day came with a subtle touch of healing and uplift, whose memory is like a precious jewel, one to cherish. Men erect beautiful, imposing temples to the Almighty, and then worship in the empty shell, for Jehovah dwells not always in temples made with hands.

How seldom we worship in the true sense, in the lofty places, to which the soul may attain, as here in the great out-of-doors. This is His footstool. Here only may true healing be found, providing we come with a contrite spirit, and accept God as our counselor and guide.

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XXXVIII

A RAINY DAY

ALL the day the hills have lain mist-shrouded, the woods rain filled. The day, instead of being gloomy, has awakened memories of far-off autumns, with dripping trees and the woodlands an infinite of gray. The hollows filled with sodden leaves, their pungent odor never to be forgotten, with the silence of softly, earthward fluttering leaves, and with it all that sense of ineffable sadness over the departed summer.

It is a long stride from boyhood, but today the wet woods lured, until donning mackintosh and thick boots, I found myself in the dense forest with their drenched branches and glistening leaves, and the monotone of softly falling rain.

The woods were filled with familiar sounds. The chirping of the nut-hatch, the cry of the jay, the melancholy call of the crow, and somewhere, from the woodland depths, the drumming of the partridge. As if to make the memory more complete, from a nearby hickory the chattering of the chipmunk.

Instantly the woods faded, and in its stead appeared a well-remembered loft at home, with its empty cage. Again as a boy the chatter of the squirrel led me pell-mell across decaying, moss-grown logs, hillocks and hidden boulders, through tangled thickets, and browning ferns, with many a tumble and bramble-torn garment, only to find the saucy fellow perched upon the outermost branch at an inaccessible height, and we gazing longingly, hopelessly upward.

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Ah! that was years on years ago. That cage has disappeared, the loft is no more, and that particular squirrel only a memory. As if in sympathy with my mood, a lone cricket made its dismal plaint, safe hidden beneath a mossy boulder.

With the familiar sounds and scents, the swish of wet leaves, I note the royal hues of goldenrod and asters, the glory of oak and maple. Here beneath the low-growing branches of hemlock and pine, the ground is thickly carpeted with the partridge vine, with ochre-hued berries. Snowberries weave intricate patterns across the mosses, rivalling the lacemaker in their chaste beauty of design.

Memory revives of delicious wild things that grew in field and wood, that as children we ate with such relish. Here are many of them. The wintergreen still retains the same flavor, the black birch its spicy taste, the tender fronds of the hemlock its pungency.

There was a time when our pockets bulged with those woodland delicacies. The floor beneath the wooden benches in the old log schoolhouse was littered with bark-stripped twigs and the room was redolent with odors of spice and balm. One cannot be a child again, but in the wet woods the sights and sounds have not changed. All its shadowy depths are filled with remembered faces and childish laughter, from out the yester years. Ah me! Those yester years!

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XXXIX

DAMASCUS

THE window of my room in Hotel Victoria opened toward the east. Punctually at 5 A. M. I was awakened by the muezzin from a nearby minaret, giving the call to prayer. Over the sleeping city it floated, this sacred formula of Islam: "God is great; there is but one God; Mohammed is the Prophet of God. Prayer is better than sleep. Come to prayer!" Toward each of the four points of the compass this chant is directed. Then all is silent, when every faithful Mohammedan bows with his face toward Mecca.

I invariably arose and looked out over the wilderness of domed roofs and embowering foliage of the night-wrapped town, to where the mountains—a shadowy range above whose crest a wan light was slowly breaking; saw it deepen to pearl and rose, and bathed in glory this oriental city. Then came the sounds of waking life, the song of birds, and the cry of donkey boys and vendors.

This was the only view I was able to obtain of Damascus, for the streets are narrow and winding, shut in by adobe walls, and one moves in a sort of twilight under the heavy timbered roofs of the bazaars. There are no views except a narrow strip of blue above you.

Its great mosque is a monument of the highest antiquity. It represents three religions. For more than three centuries it was a Christian church; then, for nearly as long a period it witnessed the worship of pagan deities, and today it is devoted to Islam worship.

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Although it is shorn of much of its original splendor, yet one finds in its great court superb Corinthian columns and exquisite carvings, with immense olden doors, brass studded and wrought hinges of wonderful workmanship.

Here and there, proving the ignorance or carelessness of the Moslems, are to be found traces of the Christian occupancy, for over one of the arches stands this inscription: "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

The only tomb in this mosque is that of John the Baptist. It is draped in priceless Indian shawls.

Near this mosque, and perhaps as old as the Moslem faith, stands the famous plane tree whose trunk is forty feet at the base, but knotted and twisted as are the ancient olive trees of Palestine.

At the southwestern corner of the city is situated the principal Moslem cemetery, a huddled mass of white-washed mounds of mud or brick, a slight shaft at the head, ornamented with a fez, showing the rank of the male, or a flower denoting the tomb of a female. I can liken these tombs to nothing else as much as a Dutch oven. Each has a tiny cavity or receptacle for water for birds, and in each is a sprig of myrtle with which to bless the tombs.

Here in a domed mausoleum, rests illustrious Moawyeh, the founder of the dynasty of Omeiyades. This tomb, as with the tomb of Fatimeh, granddaughter of Mohammed, is draped with many rich Indian shawls. Here are also buried three wives of Mohammed.

The only disappointing thing about Damascus is its

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park. There is an abundance of luxuriant shade and no dearth of water, for the Abana, in three divisions, flows through it.

One leaves Damascus with genuine regret, notwithstanding the train that bears him away passes through a delightful gorge, filled with bending fruit trees of many varieties—several that were strange and whose names I could not learn. Everywhere are crystal streams singing on their way toward the city we have just left. About us tower immense cliffs of crimson and ochre basalt. Vines, ferns, and masses of pink oleanders cling to every crevice. One can easily believe, as is averred, that here was situated the Garden of Eden.

It is an Arabian tradition that places the terrestrial Paradise in this valley of Damascus, known as "the emerald of the desert." In support of this there is shown, less than half a day's journey from Damascus, a lofty mountain of white marble, shaded with beautiful trees, and therein is a cavern which is believed to have been the abode of Adam, Cain, and Abel.

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XL

NAZARETH

AT length we caught a glimpse of Nazareth, some ten miles distant, its white walls crowning the crest of the Galilean hills. It was at the close of a wearisome day in July, and we had driven from Shechem, across the wonderful plain of Esraldon.

Again I listened, as when a child, to Scriptural tales, for Gabriel, our dragoman, pointed out the various places of interest, since here all is historic ground.

We reached the base of the hill, where the white road, in many graceful curves, winds among the broken boulders until the summit is gained, where Nazareth sits like a queen enthroned.

It was like turning the last page of the Old Testament. Lo, here was the new! We were leaving the historic plain replete with its associations of Patriarch and sages of Bible days, and turning to a scene more sacred, for here dwelt and grew to manhood the precious Savior of mankind.

Before us lay the broken path, which we must follow, climbing from curve to curve of the highway, as the poor, jaded beasts could scarcely drag the empty vehicles up that steep ascent. It was well worth the effort, however, for as each elevation was gained, distant ranges were dwarfed, or sank into the softly enfolding haze, while a glory indescribable filled the vast plain.

About Nazareth there is an air distinctive from any other town visited in Palestine. There is not that

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squalor of Bethlehem, Bethany, Shechem or Jericho. The streets are cleaner; the houses spread over a wider area, the little walled-in gardens boast more tropical plants; vines wreathe the wrought iron balconies, oleanders droop great masses of pink and white blooms from the copings of the walls.

Even in the crowded bazaars there is more light and less odor. It must ever have been thus in Nazareth, for in this land the current of time as it flowed past has left the manner and customs of the people unchanged. Their mode of living, their occupation, their dress, their interests are the same as when the child Christ trod these streets, climbed the rocky hillsides and called this His home.

One sees here the long, loose robe of the Syrian, white or striped in many colors; the outer coat of goat, or sheep's wool, woven so as to be completely waterproof, with broad stripes of alternate brown and white undyed wool; the turban or caftan bound about the head with a fillet, the sandals, the dark blue or brown cloth of the peasant woman's dress, the ornaments and bright kerchief are the same as were worn there two thousand years ago.

They still plow the fields with the iron-shod, pronged stick, and the same crude yoke fastens together the oxen. Beside each town are extensive threshing floors, where the unmuzzled ox goes around and around dragging a sledlike arrangement upon which some person rides, until the brittle straw is ground to chaff and when winnowed in the breeze, is blown away, leaving the grain in shining heaps hardening in the sunshine.

Think of the discomfort when the wind chances to be in the direction of the town, then this litter is carried

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into the homes and is found in the food, in the beds, everywhere.

Two women are still found grinding at the mill; a stone device, one stone within another. An aperture pierces the center of the upper stone through which the grain is poured. In this stone a wooden peg is fastened; this peg the women grasp and work with a see-saw motion. Bread baked from this flour is exceedingly appetizing and nutritious.

The adobe houses of sun-baked clay, with their windows and inner courts, the little stone-domed roofs with their bundles of twigs and herbs from the fields, are away from the sun and prying eyes. This land has become nearly treeless; the Mohammedan never plants a tree, and they have stripped this land of its olive orchards and groves. All remains same as in the days of our Lord, even antedating the time of Abraham.

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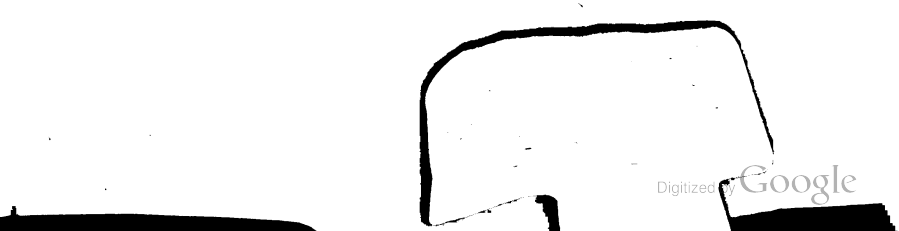
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